Bannockburn

Battle for Liberty

John Sadler

But that the Scot in his unfurnish'd kingdom,
Came pouring like the tide into a breach,
With ample and brim fullness of his force;
Galling the gleaned land with hot assays,
Girding with grievous siege castles and towns;
That England being empty of defence,
Hath shook and trembled at the ill neighbourhood.

– William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

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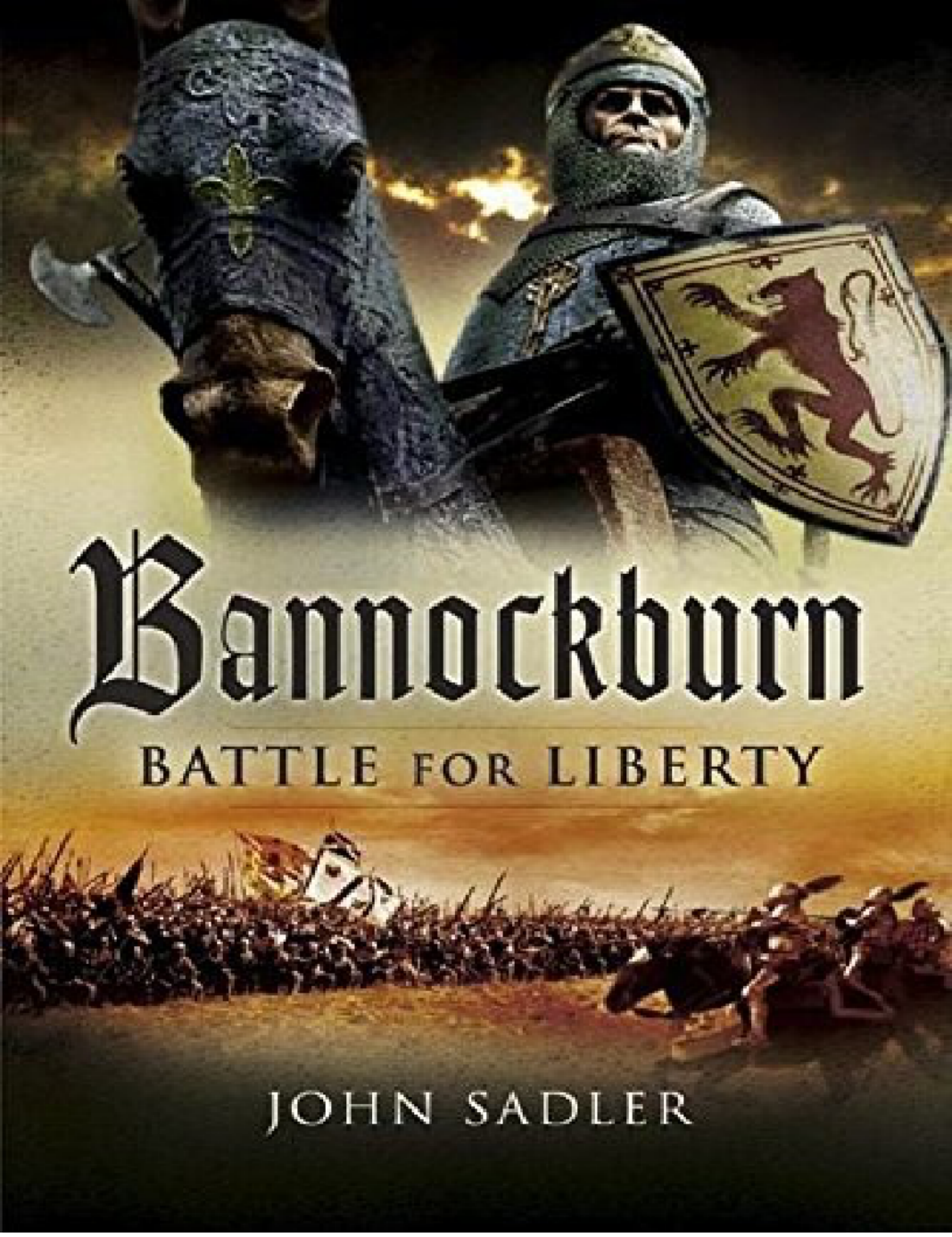
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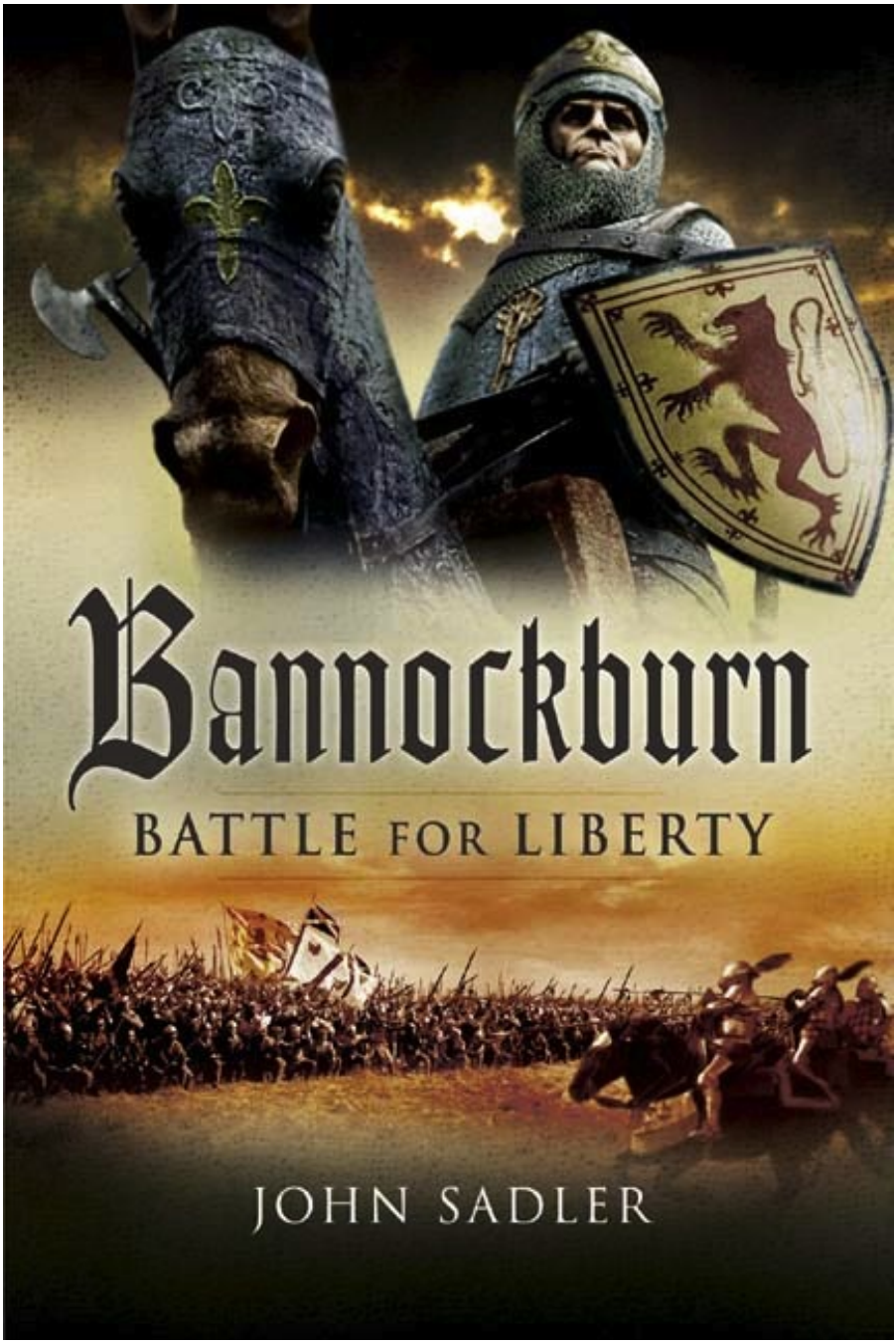
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Dedicated to My Wife

Preface

O God of Battles! Steel my soldiers' hearts;
Possess them not with fear; take from them now
The sense of reckoning' if th' opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them
– William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

This book has been a long time in the making, the product of a lifetime's obsession with Scotland, with its history and landscapes. There is, perhaps, no more epic contest than Bannockburn itself, a battle which seems to typify the Just War, the struggle by a sovereign nation to free itself from a ruthless foreign domination. The events of 1314 have a particular resonance which has never faded and have been brought even more sharply into focus in recent years by the whole devolution debate, even if this is, in part, fuelled by Hollywood fantasies such as the film *Braveheart*.

As a schoolboy is the 1960s, when history was still taught in the traditional, now no doubt unfashionable way, I learnt, at an early age, the moral of Bruce and the spider and the epic duel with de Bohun before the hosts. Bruce was the very stuff of legend, the freedom fighter, the man who liberated his countrymen from the yoke of English oppression. The reality is, of course, a good deal more complex. Bruce established himself only after a ruthless and bitter civil war and, following Bannockburn, visited a systematic and relentless reign of terror on northern England.

Apart from high drama the story of Bannockburn and the years of strife from 1296, have much to teach us today. The nineteenth-century German military philosopher Carl Philipp Gottlieb von Clausewitz, whose epic treatise *On War* extends to a hefty eight volumes, hails the concept of the 'remarkable trinity', that is the state, the army and the people harnessed to a common strategic purpose. Clausewitz was much influenced by both Napoleon and Gerd von Scharnhorst, a fellow Prussian and noted military reformer. His writing predates the modern age of industrial warfare but occurs after the dawn of the age

of mass conscription, the *levee en masse*.

Clausewitz's understanding was that the prevailing mode of warfare, introduced by Bonaparte was 'the massive military event with a decisive outcome'.[1] I think it likely he would have accepted Bannockburn as falling within this concept. Nonetheless, the battle was not one which Bruce, given a prior choice, would have chosen to fight. He had, hitherto, maintained a careful policy of reliance on 'low intensity' guerrilla type warfare, avoiding a general engagement as being too risky.

The siege of Stirling and his brother's arrangement with the castellan is traditionally regarded as having been the catalyst, one which had pitched the king onto a course he did not relish, (this, however, is open to question) This would, of course, be entirely sensible: the English could field an army that was both larger and far better furnished with heavy cavalry, then still regarded as the prime arbiter on the field. At the decisive moment, when urged by his captains to stake all on the hazard of battle, the king, after initial misgivings, chose to seize the moment. By careful generalship and inspired leadership his inferior army won a momentous victory. This, of itself, did not end the war, which was to drag on till 1328, a bitter, savage and inglorious attrition of raiding and destruction.

But, without the victory at Bannockburn, the Peace of Northampton would not have been possible. King Robert secured the national identity of Scotland. After the battle the English, previously the aggressors, were constantly on the back foot, their northern shires at the mercy of Scottish spears. Further victories at Mytton and Byland followed, the northern English were utterly cowed, the pride of their chivalry run ragged and humiliated in the course of the abortive Weardale campaign of 1327. Even the crowning triumph of the Treaty of Northampton, which set the seal on a remarkable lifetime's achievement, did not mark the end of hostilities between the two realms which sparked with dire frequency until 1568. This legacy of strife was only brought to an end by the Union of the Crowns in 1603 when, with fine irony, it was a King of Scots who ascended, unopposed, to the throne of the southern kingdom.

Over a century later, the Act of Union finally and fully unified the two realms. At the time of writing, there appears to be a growing and insistent clamour for this process to be reversed; for the two

kingdoms, once again, to seek separate destinies. Should this come to pass it is to be hoped that not all of the lessons of past history will be forgotten. At present the battlefield is commemorated by the excellent Heritage Centre, managed by the National Trust for Scotland, though much of the field is obscured by modern development, the quality of which does little for the historic environment.

John Sadler, Northumberland, Spring 2007.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Rupert Harding, my editor at Pen and Sword; to Dr David Edge of the Wallace Collection; Winnie Tyrell of Glasgow Museums; Ailsa MacTaggart of Historic Scotland; Shona Corner of National Galleries of Scotland; Chloe Rodham for the maps; the staff of the Royal Armouries, Leeds and of the National Trust for Scotland at Bannockburn Visitor Centre; Rosie Serdiville of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne; Alex Speirs, 'The Time Bandit'; Philip Walling for help with the photographs; Graham Trueman and the staff of the DLI Museum and Art Gallery in Durham.

Timeline

1286	Death of Alexander III of Scotland.
1292	John Baliol ascends the Scottish Throne.
1296	Beginning of the Wars of Independence: capture of Berwick upon Tweed and the Battle of Dunbar.
1297	Battle of Stirling Bridge, Wallace appointed as Guardian.
1298	Wallace defeated at Falkirk.
1302	Battle of Courtrai in Flanders: defeat of the French chivalry.
1304	Siege and capture of Stirling.
1305	Capture and execution of Wallace.
1306	Killing of the 'Red' Comyn by Bruce; crowning of Robert Bruce as King Robert I of Scotland; Bruce defeated at Methven by Aylmer de Valence.
1307	Death of Edward I of England ('Longshanks'); accession of Edward II; civil war in Scotland

	between Bruce and Comyn factions.
1308	Battle of the Pass of Brander.
1314	Battle of Bannockburn.
1315	Scots besieging Carlisle.
1320	Declaration of Arbroath.
1322	Battle of Boroughbridge; execution of the Earl of Lancaster.
1326	Edward II is dethroned by Isabella and Roger Mortimer.
1328	Treaty of Northampton.
1329	Death of Robert I; accession of David II.

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Stirling Bridge, 11 September 1297

Falkirk, 22 July 1298

Bannockburn, 23 June 1314

Bannockburn, 24 June 1314

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All photographs from the author's collection, unless otherwise stated.

A single-handed double-edged broadsword (replica).

A mail shirt (replica).

A horseman's axe.

A buckler of the type carried by archers (replica).

An archer's single-handed sword (replica).

A simple infantryman's helmet (replica).

The view northeast from Stirling Castle.

The current, unspeakably dreadful Wallace statue at the base of the Abbey Craig.

View of Stirling Castle showing the statue of Robert the Bruce.

The gatehouse of Stirling Castle.

The bronze monument to Bruce located outside the present visitor centre.

The view of Stirling Castle, looking north from the Borestone.

The Bannockburn, looking eastward from New Road.

The Bannockburn, looking westward towards the Telford Bridge.

The Carse viewed looking southeast from the A91.

The Carse viewed looking southwest from the A91.

Looking north and west from the present A91.

The Pelstream Burn, which witnessed the climax of the fighting on 24 June.

List of Abbreviations

Barbour – *The Bruce* by John Barbour
Baston – Baston's verses (as quoted in Bower)
Boece – *The History and Chronicles of Scotland* by Hector Boece
Bower – *Scotichronicon* by Walter Bower
Brut – *The Chronicles of England*, edited by F. W. D. Brie
Fordun – *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* by Johnannis de Fordun
Froissart – *The Chronicles of Froissart*
Guisburgh – *The Chronicles of Walter of Guisburgh*
Lanercost – *Chronicon de Lanercost*
Le Baker – *Chronica Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke*
Scalacronica – *Scalacronica* by Sir Thomas Gray of Heton
The Life of Edward II – *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, edited by N. Denholm-Young.
Trokelowe – *Annales of John of Trokelowe*
Wyntoun – *Andrew of Wyntoun's Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland*

Chapter 1
Being Introductory

We are bound to him for the maintaining of our freedom both by his rights and merits, as to him by whom salvation has been wrought unto our people, and by him, come what may, we mean to stand. Yet if he should give up what he has begun, seeking to make us or our kingdom subject to the King of England or to the English, we should strive at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own rights and ours, and we would make some other man who was able to defend us our king.

– Declaration of Arbroath, 1320

As sparrows, eagles; or the hare, the lion,
If I say sooth, I must report they were
As cannon overcharged with double cracks,
So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:
Except they mean to bathe in reeking wounds,
Or memorize another Golgotha, …

– William Shakespeare, *MacBeth*

Robert Bruce

In 1996 the body of Robert Bruce was formally exhumed and forensic sculpture techniques, applied to a cast of the skull, were employed to reconstruct the features of the king, for whom no contemporary likeness otherwise exists.[1] In the visitor centre at Bannockburn there is an image of how the ageing paladin may have appeared in later life, scarred by old wounds and ravaged by terminal illness.[2] It is, of course, not possible to gauge the accuracy of the reconstruction against portraiture but it is naturally tempting to accept the image as true. It is thus a very wondrous thing to look upon the face of Scotland's greatest king, not viewed since his death in June 1329.

Robert was born on 11 July 1374, possibly in the castle of Turnberry in Ayrshire.[3] His father was Robert de Brus, sixth Lord of Annandale (c. 1250—1304), and his mother Marjorie, daughter of

Niall, Earl of Carrick, by all accounts a formidable chatelaine, though she died in 1292 when Robert was eighteen. The union of the houses of Carrick and Annandale provided a considerable legacy. From his mother Bruce would inherit the Gaelic earldom of Carrick and, from his father, his claim to the crown of Scotland. His grandfather, the fifth Lord of Annandale, is known to history as 'Bruce the Competitor', an active claimant in the Great Cause (see Glossary), despite the weight of his four score years! His son, Robert's father, is said to have served on Edward I of England's crusade from 1270–74, though he returned to Scotland earlier, as he wed Marjorie in 1271.

She, perhaps five or six years younger was already a widow, her first husband, Adam de Kilconeath, had fallen in battle against the infidel. Legend asserts that it was Robert's sad chore to return and advise the young countess of her loss. She, for her part, was so taken by her messenger that she consigned him to the cells till he agreed to become her second husband! The marriage was a fruitful one, Robert junior had four younger brothers and as many surviving sisters. Of the boys, three, Thomas, Alexander and the doomed hero Neil, defender of Kildrummy, perished in the cause of resistance. The fiery Edward met his fate in Ireland in 1318. His sisters, as might be anticipated, married well, two to Scottish earls and one to Eric II of Norway.[4] On his mother's death, the earldom of Carrick passed directly to the young Robert, making him, still in his teens, a leading magnate.[5]

Galloway was something of a rough and ready fringe on the Scottish polity at this time, the Galwegians having a considerable reputation in war. They particularly impressed the English at the Battle of the Standard in 1138 when warriors, unprotected by harness, drove toward the English lines, even when stuck thick with arrows. Their language, a variant of Gaelic, was a survivor from their days of semi-independence, when links to Man and Ulster were strong. The Lordship was only dissolved after the abortive rising of Gille Ruadh in 1234. The Bruce family were relative latecomers of Norman descent who became successors in title to Gaelic predecessors, in their case Gilla Brigte mac Fergusa. Their later rivals, the Balliols, could claim their inheritance from another paladin, Uchtred mac Fergusa. English chroniclers were particularly censorious – the Galwegians serving under Wallace, during the raid on Hexham in 1296, were identified as desecrators of the Abbey.

Feudalism

These Norman lords were, in their day, a new breed. Scotland had been spared the more predatory attentions of land hungry freebooters unleashed by the Conquest of 1066 and the process had been more filter than invasion. The Norman influence did not really begin to grow significantly until the reign of the Anglophile David I, when the influence of feudalism had begun to be felt.[6] The feudal pyramid had the person of the king at its pinnacle, lands were then parceled out to the great magnates as 'tenants-in-chief', The grant was usually made by charter and by way of a perpetual heritable lease. Land never belonged absolutely to the magnate, that is to say, in fee simple, but the reversion was held by the Crown. The magnate, in turn, sub-let parcels of land to the gentry who, in their turn, under-let to farming tenants. The pyramidal structure relied, therefore, not on a commercial or mercenary relationship between the parties but upon an interlocking raft of obligations, determined according to rank.

The magnate owed military service to the king and the knight was similarly obliged to his lord; the period of service was traditionally forty days per annum. Further down the scale husbandry supplanted war, the farmer thus laboured, whilst the gentleman offered his sword. The agricultural classes sweated in the fields to sustain their betters, who provided the shield that girded the land. Knight service was unwaged, although if the period was to be extended, then a monetary arrangement would arise. In the course of the Edwardian wars in Wales, many of the upper tier elected to forgo remuneration, not from loyalty but self-interest, as mercenaries could expect a far lesser share of the spoils. Each lord had a fixed quota of armoured or 'harnessed' men, mounted and unmounted, which he must bring; two mounted sergeants (men-at-arms) were an effective substitute for a knight. Waging war was an expensive undertaking, the cost of arms and armour high. This grew during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century as harness increasingly made use of plate as opposed to mail defences. It became possible to contract out of knight service by paying a fine or premium, described as 'scutage'.[7]

For his part, the king carried on the business of governance through the various officers of the royal household. Military resources were organized and administered by the constable, whilst the chamberlain

was charged with finance and audit. It was the office of chancellor which presided over the king's chapel and had conduct of religious matters generally – usually a senior figure from the clergy he was responsible for the drafting and sealing of state papers, including charters and treaties. When the monarch led his host into the field the marischall led the feudal elite, the heavy horse, while the steward generally oversaw the running of the royal household. By the thirteenth century tenure of these high offices had become largely hereditary.

Beneath this upper tier clustered a scrum of lesser positions, each with its own defined role (perhaps 'job description' in the modern idiom): the Door-ward was to ensure no undue rowdiness at feats when the drink flowed too liberally, the senior clerks of provend and liverance, the pantler, forester, the royal huntsman, sergeants of Spence (their role was to procure adequate supplies of food and beverage). In Scotland, the leading magnates held their rank from the old line of Celtic *mormaers*; of these Fife was senior and enjoyed the privilege of placing the crown. These *mormaers* enjoyed vice-regal powers within their own wide lands with full conduct of defence, taxation and the administration of justice.[8] In England the old Anglo-Saxon earls had similar status which, post conquest, came to equate more with the French comital precedent. In the southern kingdom, magnates might end up with many of their holdings scattered, whilst in Scotland, where feudalism was integrated rather than imposed, estates were more concentrated.

From the reign of David I, administration of the judicial system was entrusted to three senior officials, the justiciars, each of whom was responsible for a wide span of territory: north of the Forth and Clyde; the Lothians and southeast; Galloway and the southwest. In the discharge of their responsibilities the justiciars were served by a network of sheriffs, some twenty-six in total, each of them a crown appointment.[9] This Norman framework was grafted onto Celtic precedent, there was no ruthless supplanting as had been the case in post-conquest England, but the imported influence proved pervasive. In the lowlands particularly, people turned their back on a Celtic inheritance, becoming increasingly anglicized until the old ways retreated into the west, where the Norse Gaels still held fast.

Increasing centralisation and the Norman influence fuelled the

spread of urban development, with most of the royal burghs being clustered in the east: Stirling, Edinburgh, Leith, Musselburgh, Haddington, Roxburgh and Berwick. Towns did exist in the west, flourishing seaports such as Renfrew Glasgow, Rutherglen, Irvine, Ayr and Dumfries. Growth along the eastern seaboard was stimulated by the burgeoning trade in hides, wool, timber and fish, which were exported to the Low Countries and Baltic states. Inverness was renowned as a centre for shipbuilding. Successive Scottish kings created a web of commercial marriage alliances with Brittany, Holland, England, France, Flanders, Norway and Denmark.

Perhaps the most purely physical manifestation of feudalism was the castle, be it an imposing magnate's hold or a knight's more homely motte. As the Normans brought their motte-and-bailey fortifications with them and spread a rash of these across England after 1066, the impact of castle building on Scotland was delayed and, as the Norman chivalry came by invitation rather than conquest, more diluted. The classic motte comprised a raised earthen platform, surrounded by a defensive palisade wherein were located the usual range of domestic offices. An adjacent bastion was constructed atop a steep conical mound, gained by a causeway. This was the garrison's final redoubt should the bailey below fall to escalade.

In function, the castle performed a wider role than simply providing defensible accommodation for a lord, his family and retainers. It was a palpable symbol of status, of power and authority, a centre for administration, taxation and the dispensing of justice. In war it served for defence, as a muster point and secure base for offensive operations. A small, mobile garrison could hold down a great swathe of territory from beneath its walls. Macbeth may have been the first King of Scots to import Norman knights as mercenaries, his mesnie knights fell around him during the final stand at Lumphanan. It was, nonetheless, David I whose Anglophile inclinations fuelled the process, which quickened after 1130 when the king effectively suppressed local disturbances in Moray and parcelled out attainted lands to his Norman followers.

One of the principal beneficiaries of this process was a Flemish knight named Freskin who already held manors in West Lothian. He received a grant of Duffus where, in 1130, he constructed a motte – 'the perfect model of a Norman motte and bailey castle'.[10] Duffus was

but one of perhaps as many as 250 mottes which spread over the land. Many, like Freskin's, were subsequently rebuilt in stone. Huntly Castle, in Strathbogie, was constructed toward the end of the twelfth century and Castle Urquhart, which still guards the shores of Loch Ness, was thrown up by Duncan of Fife, who, significantly, was of Celtic rather than Norman birth. Soon the bare volcanic plugs of Dumbarton, Stirling and Edinburgh were freshly crowned with fine, stone castles, whose successors still glower over the surrounding lowlands today.

By the early decades of the thirteenth century, many of the earlier timber mottes were being consolidated in stone and these new constructions were influenced by prevailing French style. John de Vaux, steward to Alexander II's French consort, Marie de Coucy, used Coucy le Chateau as the model for his splendid fortress of Dirleton, an influence which also extended to the building of Bothwell Castle on the Clyde. Often heralded as the 'noblest of northern castles', Kildrummy, near the Don, was constructed by the Earl of Mar, in part, at least, a feudal response to fresh disturbances which had erupted in Moray in 1228.[11] As the Norman influence had arrived by stealth, feudal practices tended to be simply grafted on to the existing Celtic framework; ruthless supplanting, secured by force of arms, occurred only in those areas, such as Moray, which exhibited fissiparous tendencies. Nonetheless, through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Norman influence became so pervasive as to drive out the Celtic, a trend particularly conspicuous in the rash of urban settlements. The English tongue also came to predominate, especially in the lowlands and royal residences, at Stirling, Edinburgh, Roxburgh and Berwick, which were all situated in the east.

Society and economy

The decline of Celtic influence extended to religion; until the thirteenth century Columba (Columcille) was the unchallenged Patron Saint, his reliquary, the *Brechennach*, providing the talisman for Scottish armies in the field. But, latterly, the east coast saints Andrew and Ninian, who deprecated the Celtic tradition, supplanted Columba; Canmore's English Queen, Margaret, had been canonised in 1250. Celtic laws also retreated, the ancient traditions clinging on in the remoter fastnesses of Galloway and the west, where Norman influence

was much slower to intrude. Tanistry was steadily supplanted by primogeniture.[12] Despite this move away from the ancient Celtic past, Scottish kings continued to boast of their impressive genealogies, their descent from the fabled Irish heroes of old. If Celticism lost its hold on the church and on the law, it perhaps never quite lost its grip on the imagination.

Growth in urbanization notwithstanding, the majority of the population, which never at this time exceeded half a million souls, lived in scattered rural settlements. The commons dwelt in cruck-framed timber houses with wattle-and-daub panels, the superstructure supported on several foundation courses of masonry, roofed with heather or thatch. Despite the increase of feudalism, a widespread proprietary estate, the 'ferm-toun' survived – an agricultural holding in the ownership of a number of heritors whose rights passed by will or survivorship to their children.

The knight might boast a timber hall or even a motte, the hamlets linked by a network of miry roads. Oats and wheat, together with barley, were staples, the latter accounting for perhaps as much as thirty per cent of production. Cattle were also grazed, the ratio of beasts to crops increasing in marginal areas. Most produced 'small-beer', a weak ale that formed the essential beverage, water supplies, for the most part, being unfit. If life was, in the main, pastoral, it was far from idyllic. Poverty, disease and lawlessness abounded. Good lord-ship went to the very heart of the feudal web, the essential core that bound lord and commoner. The duty of the gentry was to fight, for the crown and to protect husbandry. Those who grew crops and laboured did so under their lord's protection. Where good lordship faltered or failed, anarchy lurked; an interregnum of minority kingship was to be feared; without a strong head, the pyramid became unstable as the magnates squabbled for supremacy.

Robert Bruce was born into an established Anglo-Norman dynasty, his great-grandfather Robert Bruce IV had wed the daughter of the Earl of Huntingdon (also brother to the king of Scots). His grandfather, the redoubtable 'Competitor', had married Isabel de Clare, a daughter of the English Earl of Gloucester. The formidable marriage alliance between Robert's father and Marjorie had combined the holdings of Bruce and Carrick, the latter coming to Robert at eighteen, though his father still lived. The Bruces thus held cross-

border estate as did many Scottish magnates, (the Northumbrian Umfravilles were lords of Angus). As such it was perfectly proper, indeed obligatory, that they did homage to the king of England for the lands they held within his realm. The whole, pernicious matter of cross-border estate would complicate the allegiances of the magnates throughout Robert's life and reign and would form a serious obstacle to a lasting peace. It was the one overriding factor which contributed to the outbreak of fresh hostilities in 1332.

Throughout the early medieval period the kings of Scotland had been advised by a collective body of magnates and senior clerics. From as early as 1235 this formation, *colloquium*, becomes identifiable as a wider forum or parliament, having both a political and judicial function. By the time of Bruce, membership had been extended to embrace those of the equestrian and bourgeois classes, with three tiers or 'estates' – clergy, lay magnates and (after 1326) burgh commissioners. Parliament controlled taxation and had a voice in war and foreign policy, together with most aspects of domestic policy. During the course of the Wars of Independence, the Scottish parliament was to prove a robust and resilient institution with a strong patriot core.

David I, despite acceding to the throne in middle age, proved an effective and vigorous ruler. Though he had spent much of his life at the English court and was something of an Anglophile, the temptation offered by the civil wars between Stephen and Matilda, daughter of David's patron, Henry I, proved too compelling. Malcolm III (Shakespeare's Malcolm Canmore), had cherished the dream of creating a 'pale' or buffer state in Northern England. William I had compelled his submission in 1072 and, in 1093, he struck once too often and was killed at Alnwick. David's attempt enjoyed some success, though he too was finally seen off by the Northern English in a great battle beneath the holy blazon at Northallerton in 1138.

The shorter reign of Malcolm IV (1153-1165) was marred by internal strife and disturbances in the west. The increasing power of the Scottish throne was at variance with the fissiparous tendencies of the Norse-Gaels in the west, where Somerled, the great patriarch of what would become Clan Donald, held sway over the seaboard and a necklace of islands. It was the Scottish king's Norman knights who, at Renfrew in 1164, chastised the impudent Gaels and deprived their

great chieftain of his life. Malcolm was largely overawed by Henry II of England, acknowledged the southern king as liege lord and was even commanded to perform knight service.

Malcolm was succeeded by the martial William II ('The Lion', 1165–1214) but he, too, found campaigning in Northumberland uncongenial, being captured in a skirmish at Alnwick in 1174. By the subsequent treaty of Falaise, the captive Lion was also obliged to do homage for his kingdom of Scotland. This question of sovereignty was an ancient feud. Henry of Monmouth has Brutus of Troy divide his Iron Age realm into two parts, the dominant south going to his elder son Locrinus and the lesser north to the sibling, Alba. The kings of Wessex, extending their sway to the north, bent the early northern kings to their will and compelled their allegiance. As early as 973, King Edgar was ceremoniously rowed along the Dee in a barge oared by half a dozen client kings, including Kenneth II of Scotland (971-955).

A complex situation was further clouded when Richard I of England, 'Lionheart', needing to fund his crusading venture, sold out his right by means of a formal quitclaim for a consideration of £10,000. As trade and thus prosperity grew during the early and middle years of the thirteenth century, the two kingdoms appeared to have reached a plateau of understanding. Alexander II (1214-1249) married King John's daughter Joan and, in the next generation, the English princess Margaret, daughter of John's son and successor Henry III, wed Alexander III (1249-1286). Despite this apparent accord, there was still some cross-border bickering. Alexander II led six major raids into Northern England, accepting the hazard of inevitable retaliation that periodically left the Lothians and southeastern ports smouldering.

In retrospect and in the light of the subsequent horrors and vicissitudes of the war with England, the reign of Alexander III came to be viewed as something approaching a golden age. There was, in the main, peace and prosperity; trade with Scotland's commercial partners on the far side of the North Sea was booming. Vast herds of sheep were grazing the southern uplands and the fine wool from their backs found a ready market in Flanders. Berwick-upon-Tweed was sufficiently important to merit two overseas centres, the Flemings' Red Hall and the White Hall of the German merchants. The former were sufficiently committed to enter into an undertaking to help defend the

town from the English as a term of their tenure. In 1266 the king of Norway ceded both Man and the Hebrides, thus extending the bounds of the kingdom.

The pernicious question of overlordship had gone into abeyance but had not vanished. The cordial state of relations meant the king of Scots held lands in the southern realm from the king of England. For these holdings he was obliged to do homage, to acknowledge his fellow monarch as feudal superior. This was not uncommon, for his part the English king was obliged to swear fealty to France for his territories there. The question of whether the king of Scots was a free prince in his own lands or remained a vassal of England for the wider holding remained unresolved.[13] If Alexander III was fortunate in the condition of his realm, he was less lucky in the all important matter of securing his dynasty. A king needed sons. His English wife had duly provided three lads, which should have been sufficient, but she died in 1275 and all three of her offspring followed her into their early graves, leaving the middle-aged king without male issue.

The succession, therefore, fell upon his infant granddaughter, the Maid of Norway, who was formally recognised in 1284. This was far from satisfactory, so the king decided to find a new wife, the teenage Yolande of Dreux. In the late winter of 1286, the forty-four-year-old king could yet expect to produce a further male child and live long enough to avoid the uncertainties of a minority kingship. So anxious was he to perform his dynastic chore that, on Monday 18 March, in foul weather, he chose to ignore the warnings of his counselors and hazard the crossing of the Forth to bed his nubile consort at Kinghorn. Despite the filthy conditions he would not be gainsaid and headed off for Inverkeithing. Here, the baillies issued further dire predictions but, undeterred, the king, with only a small retinue, rode off along the wild, storm-tossed coast, into the gathering cloak of winter darkness. He was destined never too see Yolande again, for sometime in that awful dark his horse stumbled and he was thrown, his stiffening body undiscovered till the pallid light of dawn revealed the dread certainty.

The realm was without a king.

Chapter 2
The Dogs of War

I called for armor, rose, and did not reel,
But, when I thought, rage at his noble pain
Flew to my head, and turning I could feel
My wound break open wide. Over again
I had to let those storm-lit valleys heal.
– Thom Gunn, *The Wound*

Hang out our banners on the outward walls,
The cry is still 'They come'. Our castle's strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie
Till famine and the ague eat them up
– William Shakespeare, *MacBeth*

Of arms and men

In 1181 Henry II of England, founder of the great Angevin Empire and notorious as the instigator of Archbishop Becket's murder, made statutory provision for the arming of the nation. The Assize of Arms specified the arms and armour to be carried and worn by each degree in society from the knight to the commoner. This legislation was revised by Henry III in 1242 and then substantially modified by his son Edward I 'Longshanks' forty years later. To compensate for a shortage of knights, Henry ordained that all those having £20 or more, be they gentlemen or yeomen, be knighted (it was possible to commute feudal service by means of a cash subsidy, a form of war tax).[1] At the same time the militia were re-organised by the introduction of commissioners of array. These officers were charged to review all able-bodied men in the shire and to select a handful from each vill deemed fit to serve, their rations usually funded from the communal purse.

The Assize of 1242 established the social distinctions which would obtain for recruiting: any who had in excess of £15 per annum were

obliged to provide their own mounts; £2 freeholders were to have their own bows.[2] There was no attempt, at this juncture, to standardize kit, nor were arms or harness provided by the crown, each recruit must shift for himself. Inevitably, this led to wide discrepancies with the poorest remaining the most ill-equipped. For his initial Scottish campaign of 1296, Longshanks extended a form of conscription, which he had devised the year before, whereby all those who held property to the value of £40 or more were to be ready to do service on three weeks notice; wages would be paid but each was responsible for arms and equipment appropriate to his standing. The move, like all such measures through the ages, proved less than popular.[3]

Edward I also expanded the role of the Royal Household as the primary state engine of war, the only military elite that represented a form of standing army. The Household acted as more than simply a kernel of dedicated professional warriors bound to the king's service; its function extended to the administrative and logistical. The chosen organ of the Household which accepted responsibilities for the logistical sinews of war was the Wardrobe. For his Scottish campaigns of 1298–1300 the king retained some 1,300 knights (*milites*) and perhaps 3,000-4,000 sergeants (*serviens*) plus men-at-arms.

In prosecuting his expensive wars of conquest Edward was the beneficiary of a significant boost in royal revenue generated by a booming economy, though by the end of the reign he was in serious difficulties, the Exchequer emptied and heavily in deficit. The cost of the king's great castle-building programme in occupied Wales drained off cash resources at a staggering rate. Partly as a consequence of this, there was no money for an equivalent scheme in Scotland, which by virtue of its size and topography, would have posed a significantly more onerous exercise. In the reign of his son, Edward II, a king unhappily noted more for his defeats than his triumphs, further efforts were made to improve the quality and composition of the crown forces by requiring both magnates and towns to muster suitably-furnished heavy infantry ('the foot') in addition to their established obligation to supply cavalry ('the horse'). Such a levy was called out to march to the relief of beleaguered Norham Castle, the 'queen of border fortresses', in 1319.[4] The unsettled conditions in the northern marches meant that there was a continued reliance on locally-raised

militias, including men-at-arms, archers and light cavalry ('hobilers').

A contemporary chronicler has left us with this stirring vision, fit for the pages of Scott or Malory, of the English host on the march northwards from Carlisle in the campaign of 1300:

> There were many rich caparisons embroidered on silks and satins; many a beautiful pennon fixed to a lance, many a banner displayed. The neighing of horses was heard from afar; the mountains and valleys were covered with packhorses and wagons with provisions, tents and pavilions.[5]

In practice, the east coast route, along the line of Dere Street, the old Roman road, was the favoured path for the English invader, used by Longshanks in the Falkirk campaign of 1298 and followed by his son on the way to his nemesis at Bannockburn. The advantages of using Dere Street were that it was flatter than the west coast route and the fleet could more easily keep station with the army – this was essential for adequate supply and revictualling. Professor Barrow, distinguished biographer of Robert Bruce, citing the apparently well-informed chronicler of *The Life of Edward II*, records that such was the magnitude of the royal baggage train snaking its way towards Stirling in the hot June of 1314 that the column of wagons, had they been lined up one behind the other, would have stretched for over twenty miles!

Troop types

We may therefore summon up an impression of an Edwardian army on the march which is somewhat less heroic than the poet might have us believe. The knights, divided for the 1300 campaign into four divisions, would not mount their precious destriers until taking the field; they would rather amble on lighter palfreys whilst grooms led the valuable chargers. Most armour and trappings would be stowed in the pack or baggage train, colours would be muted rather than flamboyant, the whole seeming more like a migration. The foot, clad in a riot of gear (there being no standardisation of kit), would slouch in uncomfortable columns, clouded by the vast quantities of dust stirred by their betters, ill shod, generally ill provisioned and frequently unwilling. These infantrymen were clearly socially inferior to the knights, though drill and training were by no means absent. De

Montfort is said to have remarked as he saw his doom march up at Evesham 'By the arm of St James, they have not learned that for themselves, but were taught it by me!'.[6] The foot were divided into platoons of a score led by a vintenar, companies of a hundred captained by a centenary and battalions of a thousand led by millenaries.

Here and there we might see a well-drilled troop of continental mercenaries, though the use of these had declined markedly in the course of the later thirteenth century, or specialist troops such as engineers, their carts loaded with timbers and tools. The army was a sprawling host that required an array of trades to keep it functioning – carpenters, wheelrights, farriers, armourers, bowyers, fletchers, surgeons and sutlers, with a motley trail of wives and whores plodding in its wake. Add to this diverse mix unwieldy herds of beasts and flocks of sheep, driven by drovers and churning the way still further, and we see a huge column stretching for mile upon mile, the very sight of which must have terrorised local inhabitants for whom the passage of a medieval army could only spell ruin.

Despite the number of full-scale invasions and counter-invasions mounted by both English and Scots, the more usual form of warfare featured infinitely smaller mounted columns, raiders rather than invaders, relying on mobility and surprise rather than numbers. It is unlikely that a beleaguered peasantry would be able to draw much solace from such alternative tactics. Behind the army in the field stood a complex logistical effort that sorely taxed the resources of the medieval state. To underpin every campaign it was necessary to establish a series of forward supply dumps; Berwick in the east and Skin-burness near Carlisle in the west, both of which were victualled from the sea. These supplies were usually collected by the royal prerogative of 'prise', a form of compulsory purchase guaranteed, at least in theory, by promissory note. The ships that were employed to transport the supplies were often equally unwilling, being private merchantmen pressed into the royal service.

The Wardrobe, which was the engine driving the war effort, kept full and meticulous accounts of its undertakings. The cofferers and controllers were in effect senior civil servants; they travelled with the army, bringing their own extensive trail of clerks and retainers. Their task was never easy for the forces deployed in the field consumed vast

quantities of food and drink. As most water was unfit, the soldiers relied upon 'small-beer', a weak brew carried in barrels on carts. Foodstuffs comprised staples such as bread and potage (a mix of beans, peas and oatmeal). Poor milling left grit in the flour, which wore down teeth, and the basic diet was enlivened by fresh or salted meat and dried fish. The risks of too much ale on empty bellies can be judged from the fracas which occurred on the eve of Falkirk, Jean le Bel reporting a similar riot at York at the outset of the ill-fated Weardale fiasco.[7] An army of 30,000 men would consume some 4,500—5,000 quarters of wheat per week (800 imperial tons); 5,000 horses would need 2,000 quarters of oats and fodder.[8]

The king had power to issue commissions of array which, as mentioned, empowered his officers to call up local militias, who, at least in theory, were to be the best armed and accoutred men from each village in the county. This system was open to much abuse, a tendency Shakespeare was later to parody in *Henry IV*: [Falstaff] 'If I be not ashamed of my soldiers I am a soused gurnet. I have misused the king's press damnably'. In 1294 the king empowered Hugh Cressingham, Roger Brabazon and Peter Malore to raise men from six northern counties.[10] This was a shift from established practice which relied upon the sheriffs; clearly the magnates were better placed and perhaps less open to corrupt practices. Where numbers were needed, the sheriffs were likely too few, using the men who would lead the recruits would tend to promote a more judicious selection!

During the period in question, the early fourteenth century, the mailed horseman, the flower of chivalry, was still the prime arbiter on the battlefield. The roots of knighthood lay in the mist-shrouded past. Chivalry was a creation of the early Middle Ages which, on paper at least, provided a code for the behaviour, on and off the field, of the military elite. The profession of arms was the only career open to a man of good family and he trained assiduously from an early age, usually being placed in the house of another noble to receive his training among other young men of his class, squires (from *ecuyer*, bearers of the shield or *ecu*).

The horse may have been comprised of a basic ten man unit or *conroi*. Though this was being replaced by a larger grouping, twice that size, this was certainly the basic mounted, tactical formation favoured by the Templars. By the early fourteenth century the cavalry

were likely massed in squadrons of one hundred, comprising four bannerets, sixteen knights and eighty squires. Following Templar practice the knight may have mounted with one squire in the line, carrying his lance, and the other more to the rear, leading the spare horses. The senior would hand the lance to his master when the squadron was ready to ride and follow him in the charge.[11]

To Longshanks the Scottish Wars were in the nature of a police action rather than a glorious endeavour. Those against whom he campaigned were mere traitors, rebellious vassals, not entitled to the courtesies of war as between equals. Even though, by the later fifteenth century, chivalry was felt to be in serious decline, authors still extolled its virtues:

> What a joyous thing is war, for many fine deeds are seen in its course, and many good lessons learnt from it … You love your comrade so much in war. When you see that your quarrel is just and your blood is fighting well, tears rise in your eyes. A great sweet feeling of loyalty and pity fills your heart on seeing your friend so valiantly exposing his body to execute and accomplish the command of our Creator. And then you prepare to go and live or die with him, and for love not abandon him. And out of that there arises such a delectation, that he who has not tasted it is not fit to say what a delight is. Do you think that a man who does that fears death? Not at all; for he feels strengthened, he is so elated, that he does not know where he is. Truly he is afraid of nothing.[12]

The *schiltron*

Throughout the earlier period of the Wars of Independence the Scots continually fought at a disadvantage. True, they had the benefit of interior lines, but as the poorer nation they suffered a constant deficit in terms of both heavy cavalry and missile troops. The response to this, first seen on the field of Falkirk in 1298 under William Wallace, was the hedge of spears, the '*schiltron*' or '*schiltrome*'. The term appears to mean something akin to a 'shield wall' as might have been deployed in the Viking era, but under the leadership and inspiration of 'the Guardian' it became a mobile formation, bristling with steel. The idea of the phalanx of pikemen was hardly a novel concept –

Alexander's phalangites had helped him overcome the might of Persia and win victories throughout the breadth of Asia Minor in the fourth century BC.

A *schiltron* was formed by a line of spears several ranks deep bending at the flanks till they met in what was then a circular formation. The points were thrust outwards to form a formidable barrier which, unless breached, could resist any assault by the horse. Unsupported cavalry recoiled before the *schiltron* in the opening moves at Falkirk and again on the first day of Bannockburn. The numbers employed were variable but each formation seems to have formed a tactical unit with a commander who most likely remained in the centre with the reserve, which was fed in to the lines as casualties mounted. When facing horse, the leading rank would tuck the butts of their spears in front of the rear foot, grasping the staves in both hands, points facing upward. This formation with the rear ranks closing up provided an impenetrable, bristling forest of points. For all their weight and fury the horse could never hope to overcome such an obstacle. The weapon itself was cheap and easy to produce, a steel head fixed to an ash stave some fourteen to eighteen feet in length.

In general the Scots fought at a considerable disadvantage, theirs was a much poorer and less populous country, riven by nearly a generation of war. King Robert could not afford mercenaries, he would struggle to find any means whereby he could retain men by paying wages. Scotland had fewer magnates and knights; numbers of both remained loyal to the king of England. A ravaged economy could not bear the groaning burden of increased taxation. King Robert's tactics, when he took the war into Northern England, proved effective in several ways. Raiding and waste weakened the north of England and led to a drop or elimination of revenue; the constant levying of blackmail obliged the English to bear the fiscal burden of continuing the war against them!

This was a form of economic warfare which, though apparently crude, was also highly effective. Good lordship was destroyed. The frustration of knights like Gilbert de Middleton and even Andrew Harcla appears palpable. 'Fright-fulness' – the exertion of terror tactics as a means of pursuing policy – was honed in the Anglo-Scottish wars. Edward III and later Henry V exported this harsh doctrine into France with, in many regions, dreadful consequences for the inhabitants.[13]

Pike tactics were later developed to a fine art by the Swiss who relied upon a formidable mix of momentum and discipline. Their victories were facilitated by a clever use of terrain, concealing the troops in dead ground or woodland until contact was imminent, then sweeping forward with great *élan* to steamroller the opposing forces, who, if they received the charge whilst static, would be swept away, trampled or impaled. The Swiss recognised that the formation had to both keep moving and avoid prolonged exposure to the shooting of missile troops to which they could not respond. This was the main weakness of the *schiltron*, as the events on the field at Falkirk showed. If immobile and unsupported by horse or archers to keep enemy missile troops at bay, the formations were horribly vulnerable. Wallace had to endure the agony of watching his men shot down in droves by relentless longbows, so weakening the strength of each unit that they were inevitably overcome when the horse swept down upon them once again.

At Bannockburn, Bruce had quite clearly learnt from Wallace's mistakes. As we shall see, his formations retained their momentum, attacking in echelon so that each division in turn crashed into the enemy with sustained impetus, a tactic favoured by the redoubtable Swiss. Later commanders, however, disregarded or failed to appreciate the lessons of Bannockburn where Keith's light horse rode down the few archers Edward managed to deploy. These light horse or 'prickers' were used for scouting and reconnaissance, but once battle was joined there was little direct control that a commander could exercise. Armies were marshalled into three divisions or 'battles' – the van or vaward, the main battle and the rear – which deployed for combat in line, the knights and men-at-arms with archers to the fore standing beneath the unfurled banners of their captain or lord. On the march the army advanced in columns, conforming to the three divisions.

Hobilers, specifically Scottish light horse, a fast moving force of mounted infantry carrying their meager provisions, were ideal troops to deploy in cross-border raiding. Jean le Bel, the Hainaulter who took part in the abortive Weardale campaign of 1327, comments on how ill suited heavy cavalry were to warfare on the marches. The English blundered through mire and over barren moss in search of a will o' the wisp foe, which would never stand and fight, yet mounted continued alarums. The commissariat swiftly broke down. The men,

mail rusting in the dismal rain, suffered many discomforts, mocked by their fleeter enemy.

Commanders

War is and has always been a hazardous business. In the medieval period a commander had limited forces at his disposal, a defeat in the field was likely to be fatal to his cause, and quite likely to his person. Communications were dependent upon gallopers and, where possible, signalling with flags; supply and victualling were a constant headache and treachery waited around every corner. In terms of command structures, the army was traditionally divided into three or four corps, each commanded by a man of rank. That a magnate should lead was almost an essential as the chivalry were loath to take orders from one of inferior status (and not infrequently equally recalcitrant when receiving orders from a feudal superior). The king, as commander-in-chief, would lead one corps, exposing his person to the chance of battle, though surrounded by his household men. These sub-commander's appointments were not fixed or of long duration, indeed the responsibility might well be entrusted on the very eve of battle.

A commander of rank, where demonstrably inexperienced, might lead in name only. Edward II, whilst prince, commanded a force in the campaign of 1301, though actual authority appears to have been vested in the experienced Earl of Lincoln. Edward I was not averse to delegating local commands to those from the knightly class. He tried, at one stage, to replace the absentee Earl Warenne with Brian Fitzalan of Bedale, but the knight took fright at the likely costs of his appointment! Those officers who proved unsatisfactory or dilatory in their offices might find themselves rebuked.[14] In 1315 Edward II sought to delegate the defence of the north to a quartet of local knights, but they clearly lacked the authority and the resources, being replaced by Aymer de Valence and, latterly, by Thomas of Lancaster, a political rather than a military choice as the earl had no martial credentials.[15] Smaller commands were frequently and successfully entrusted to men of middle rank, particularly household knights, tried fighters such as John Botecourt, who lead a *chevauchée* (mounted raid) into Nithsdale in 1304 and repeated the exercise three years later.[16]

Once battle commenced it is probable that a commander could do little to influence events. Nonetheless for purposes of morale a leader

was expected to display both valour and prowess. Bruce's triumph over his impetuous challenger, de Bohun, in front of the lines at Bannockburn, was a tremendous boost to his beleaguered men, particularly the Highlanders to whom such a Homeric display was the very epitome of valour.

Grand tactics

In the mid-thirteenth century the bulk of the fighting was done by the mailed knights who clung to their destriers. In the Evesham campaign of 1265, Long-shanks had found himself facing two armies: that of the elder de Montfort west of the Severn, and that of his son which had been before the walls of Pevensey. Edward, gathering forces, had barred the line of the Severn, pinning Simon in the west. Bridges were broken, Gloucester secured and the rebel fleet slighted at Bristol. Alerted to his father's peril the younger de Montfort, also raising men, reached Kenilworth. Longshanks, at Worcester, was roughly half way between his enemies. He struck swiftly, annihilating the younger Simon in a well-mounted dawn raid, before turning back to confront the elder at Evesham.

With his army marching in three columns, Edward was able to corral de Montfort at the base of a slope, the river bending on three sides with a detached corps blocking any avenue of escape. Simon the elder thus had to try and fight his way clear of the trap. In the mêlée, he and many of his supporters were cut down. Edward used his archers to shoot regular volleys against the relatively-unarmoured Welsh spearmen in de Montfort's ranks, causing loss and panic.

Those embarking upon knightly service were customarily provided with letters of protection, in effect amounting to an indemnity from legal proceedings which might arise whilst they were away from home and thus unable to respond. The Holkham Picture Bible, produced in the early years of the fourteenth century, contains a pair of striking images, placed one above the other. The upper shows mailed knights fighting on horseback, the epitome of chivalry, whilst the lower shows the commons in action in a furious mêlée involving bows, falchions, swords, bucklers and axes.[17]

For the first of his Welsh wars Longshanks recruited some 15,000 foot, over half of which were from the southern rim of the principality, though numbers did fluctuate according to tactical

requirements. For the Falkirk campaign of 1298 Edward raised a staggering total of 26,000 foot, the largest muster of his long reign. In subsequent expeditions the numbers of foot present fell dramatically. In 1300 he took perhaps 9,000, three years later 7,500 and perhaps half this in the final campaigns. Experience showed that fighting in the inhospitable reaches of the border and the southwest did not favour the deployment of large forces, the country too bare and the foe too elusive.[18] By the closing years of the reign, the king's finances were slipping steadily into the red. Taxation, customs dues and generous lines of credit from his Italian bankers had all helped to fill the war chest but the cost of the Welsh and Scottish campaigns had been enormous and the meagre revenues from captured lands offered no real return.[19]

The indifferent quality of kit demonstrated by the bulk of the foot did stimulate some attempts at central procurement. Edward II appears to have entertained the notion he could create a corps of heavy infantry and efforts were made in this direction after 1316. Temporarily abandoned, further attempts were launched after 1323. The best equipped were to be paid at 4d per diem, those with some gear 3d, and for those with the worst kit a miserly 2d.[20] Heavily-armed foot soldiers were restricted in terms of mobility, it was the introduction, in the 1330s, of the mounted archer that was to fuel a mini revolution in warfare.

Good intelligence was, as ever, vital in the conduct of military operations. Edward I had knowledge of his enemy's dispositions before Evesham, which he put to good effect and, when an army was operating in unfamiliar country, the scouts, 'scourers' or 'prickers' were its eyes and ears. In the course of the Falkirk campaign Edward had been considering abandoning the advance and leading his hungry army, still unblooded, southwards. It was at this nadir that his scouts brought news of the Scottish army deployed nearby, intelligence which was to dramatically affect the outcome.

As a rule, armies deployed in a linear formation, with opposing divisions aligned. There was little scope for sophisticated manoeuvre prior to the advance to contact. Later in the century, in 1388, The Earls of March and Douglas mounted a bold flank attack in the moonlight at Otterburn, with decisive results. Troops being assailed by arrows tended to bunch up, sheering away from the missile troops

loosing the rain of death; by so doing, of course, they presented an even finer target, a fate which befell the Regent Mar's army at Dupplin Moor in 1332.

On the field trumpets were employed for giving standard orders, much in the way bugles were used later. At the first blast, the horses were to be saddled; at the second, the men would don harness and make ready their battle gear. On the third summons they would mount, ready for action. Order and cohesion were important. The advance would begin at the slow (*petit*) pace, the men keeping in their divisions. Although Edward's reign did not witness any large-scale employment of mercenaries, a number of continental knights fought throughout the Scottish wars – these were usually renowned paladins, seeking further laurels.

An eye for ground is an invaluable, even essential attribute in a commanding general. The use of dead ground such as the English commanders employed at Neville's Cross (1346) to hide Edward Baliol's mounted reserve, allowed the horse hitherto unseen, to deploy unhindered at a critical point in the fight. Medieval captains were usually literate and familiar with their trade. A modern writer has, however, summed up the likely approach of most professional soldiers and even though he is writing with reference to the Italian mercenary *condotierre*, his remarks ring true for most armies of the earlier period:

> The fifteenth-century captain learnt the art of war as an apprentice to an established condotierre, not from books. He may have been gratified to learn from one of the humanists in his entourage that his tactics resembled those of Caesar in Gaul but it is unlikely that he consciously intended them to do so. It was not a study of the Roman republican army which produced a revival in infantry, but the practical necessities of fifteenth-century warfare.[21]

We should not forget that despite the supposed influence of chivalry, 'fright-fulness', the deliberate harrying of an enemy's lands and civilian population, was an accepted tactic: conquest by terror and waste. As a form of economic warfare this was undoubtedly effective, destroying the enemy's crops and indeed the tools needed to produce them. Such tactics also struck at the social order. Good 'lordship' was

an essential element in the baron's relationship with his tenants; if this was damaged or destroyed the lord's position became increasingly tenuous. Plunder was a prime incentive to medieval soldiers and such robbery also reduced the economic wealth of the enemy.

Atrocity breeds atrocity. The Scots were the first to taste Longshanks' ruthlessness with the fall of Berwick in 1296. Wallace and later Bruce retaliated by striking into the English border counties. In the wake of the defeat at Bannockburn, this pressure was increased to the extent that the Scots were able to levy large amounts of blackmail from the northern shires, converting fright-fulness to commercial advantage.

Jean II, king of France, after signing the humiliating treaty of Brétigny in 1360, explained his willingness to agree to such terms in the following manner:

> Because of the said wars many mortal battles have been fought, people slaughtered, churches pillaged, bodies destroyed and souls lost, maids and virgins deflowered, respectable wives and widows dishonoured, towns, manors and buildings burnt and robberies, oppressions and ambushes on the roads and highways committed. Justice has failed because of them, the Christian faith has chilled and commerce has perished, and so many other evils and horrible deeds have followed from these wars that they cannot be said, numbered or written[22]

The knight and his weapons

In Longshanks' day the mounted knight relied mainly upon chain mail for bodily defence, together with a flat-topped helmet with narrow eye slits ('the sights'), the cheek pieces perforated for limited ventilation, with arming cap and a mail hood or 'coif' worn underneath. His mail would consist of two garments: a long-sleeved, thigh-length shirt called a hauberk, and leg defences or hosen. Mail is both flexible and, when compared with plate, quite light. It may, however, not protect the wearer against a crushing blow, which can cause severe contusions or fractures even if the links hold. That vulnerable area around the neck received extra protection from a stiff, laced collar, a form of gorget, and possibly reinforced with steel plates. Occasionally the coat of plates, (a descendant of the *lorica squamata* of the classical

age), was preferred; mailed gauntlets or mittens were carried to protect the hands. By the dawn of the fourteenth century the thighs were further protected by tubed defences worn over the mail and linking to knee guards or 'poleyns'.

As the need for greater protection grew it became commonplace, following continental fashion, for the horseman to secure additional protection in the form of a poncho-like garment reinforced with steel plates to back and breast. Shoulder defences, or 'ailettes', were also added, often bearing the wearer's heraldic device. Shields, shaped like the base of an iron and curved to conform with the contours of the body, were also still carried. The increasing use of the longbow after 1300 spurred the need for further improvements – mail could not resist the deadly bodkin point – and gutter-shaped plate defences to the arms and legs were introduced, strapped on over the mail.

For the knight, aside from his harness his biggest investment was in his war horse or destrier. Good bloodstock came from France, Spain and Hungary. A sound horse could cost up to £30, a considerable sum. The animals were not as large as modern hunters, typically between 15 and 16 hands but with good, strong legs, deep chest and broad back. As a rule the destrier was reserved for the charge, on the line of march the knight would ride the lesser palfrey whilst his followers jogged along behind on inexpensive rounceys.[23]

With its high bow and cantle, the knightly saddle provided both additional protection against slashing cuts and also gave support which, coupled with the use of the stirrups, gave the knight the necessary platform for combat. The valuable warhorse was itself, to a degree, armoured, with two sections of protective covering, before and behind the saddle. The fore part covered the head with openings for nose, eyes and mouth; the longer rear portion reached as far as the hocks. This leather and quilted harness was stiffened by the chanfron, a plate section shaped to the horse's face – striking at the face was a standard footman's tactic. As he prepared himself for combat the knight would keep his lance in the upright position. The lighter weapon of the Conquest era had given way to a stouter, heavier model that was carried in the couched position under the arm, held securely against the rider's flank and angled to the left over the neck of his mount, resting on the shield. The amount of movement was circumscribed, a wider arc could only be created by 'aiming' the

horse.

When he trotted forward, approaching the canter, he would lift the lance clear of the rest and wedge his backside firmly against the cantle, he would lean forward with his knees fixed. In this position the shock of impact, which could otherwise result in an ignominious and potentially fatal tumble, was dispersed from the shoulders, through the rider's chest and buttocks onto the solid bulk of the mount. The position also favoured the use of the sword once the lance, essentially a 'one-shot' weapon, was expended. In terms of its symbolic potency swords were the very emblem of knightly rank, blades imbued with the legendary spirit of Excalibur. By the early fourteenth century the knightly sword was a long-bladed, predominantly single-handed weapon, double-edged with a broad, straight, full-length fuller. 'Hand-and-a-half swords', or 'swords of war', had longer blades (there is record, from Longshanks' day of a sword from Cologne with a blade length of forty-five inches and a five inch hilt). Quillons, the cross-piece protecting the hand, were long and either straight or turned up toward the point.

Daggers were a preferred accessory, fashioned like miniature swords and intended for stabbing. It was standard practice to dispatch an armoured foe, once brought to the ground, with the point of the knife driven in through the sights of the helmet or into the armpit or groin, as the *coup de grâce*. The commons might carry the heavy broad-bladed falchion, a cleaver-like weapon which could deliver a cut of tremendous force. A very fine example, the Conyers Falchion, survives in Durham Cathedral. While Danish axes mounted on six-foot shafts were still very much in evidence for the infantry, mounted warriors might use the shorter horseman's axe or a mace.

The knights, paragons of chivalry, represented shock and awe on the field. It is unlikely the charge ever reached the speeds represented by Hollywood knights on film, probably never faster than a moderate canter. Even so, the sight of these caparisoned horsemen, grimly anonymous in their crested helms, their lance points bristling, a ton and more of mailed rider and horse bearing down inexorably would be terrifying, particularly to raw foot. Once tumbled from his horse, however, the knight forfeited his apparent invulnerability. William the Lion, surprised before the leaguer of Alnwick in 1174, boldly charged his mounted opponents and unhorsed one, but, his horse then being

killed beneath him, he was hopelessly pinned beneath the carcass. A generation earlier the fearsome Richard Marshal, son of the famous William, Earl of Pembroke, a lion in the mêlée, hacked both hands from one attacker who sought to grapple him, fighting off all challengers till unhorsed and swiftly brought down by common footsoldiers, sustaining injuries that proved mortal.[24]

In terms of distinguishing English and Scots the chivalry of both sides would wear similar armours. The fourteenth century grave slab of Brice Mackinnon on Iona shows an effigy wearing a basinet over a coif with a mail collar or 'pisane'. He also wears a pleated fabric outer garment, or 'aketon', which was waxed and stiffened, stuffed with rags or tallow, to provide protection and, though less effective than plate, was considerably cheaper and lighter. He is armed with a hand-and-a-half sword which has a distinctive, lobed pommel.

Footsoldiers

Whilst knights and men-at-arms would wear full harness, archers tended to favour padded 'jacks' or 'brigandines'. These were fabric garments reinforced with plates of steel or bone riveted to the leather or canvas, sometimes just stuffed with rags. Much lighter and cheaper than plate, these afforded surprisingly good protection and were sometimes finished with sleeves of mail. Though archers generally did not wear leg protection, billmen and men-at-arms might wear full or part leg harness. By this time the crude peasant's bill had been refined into an elegant killing implement, with a long head tapering to a point, the blade furnished with a hook and a handy spike on the back edge. When the bill and spear collided, the latter had the edge in length, but when momentum was lost the bill could quickly develop the upper hand in a mêlée.

Billmen, like their more esteemed contemporaries, the archers, practiced long and hard with their weapon. The English became renowned in its use. In close combat the axe blade could lop the head off the spear, unless, as was rarely the case, the point was fitted with steel strips or languets. Then the holder was left with a rather unwieldy stick. Perhaps the most famous instance of a mass duel of this nature occurred in the course of the Battle of Flodden in 1513, when the Scots pike formations, having lost cohesion in a disorderly advance, were bested by English bills.[25]

The fierce and proud Norse-Gael warriors from Galloway, the Western Highlands and the Isles fought in their traditional attire and with their own weapons under the leadership of their chiefs. United by blood and honour, skilled in raid and foray, their fighting skills honed by endemic clan warfare, they were fearsome opponents. The sixteenth-century Scots historian, John Mair, has left us a fine description of a contemporary clansman and we may assume that this appearance had not much altered from the preceding centuries:

> From the mid leg to the foot they go uncovered; their dress is, for an overgarment, a loose plaid and a shirt, saffron dyed. They are armed with a bow and arrows, a broadsword and small halbert. They always carry in their belt a stout dagger, single edged but of the sharpest. In time of war they cover the whole of their body with a coat of mail, made of iron rings and in it they fight. The common folk amongst the Wild Scots [Highlanders] go out to battle with the whole body clad in a linen garment sewed together in patchwork, well daubed with wax or with pitch, and with an overcoat of deerskin.[26]

Yew was the timber most favoured by bowyers, though ash, elm and wych-elm were also employed. In length the stave was around six feet, in section akin to a rounded 'D'. An average draw weight might be anywhere from 80 lb to 120 lb (as a comparison, a modern sporting bow has a pull of about 45 lb). Momentum, which is defined as mass multiplied by velocity, was considerable and the stout yeomen of England could, it was said, punch a hardened bodkin point through several inches of oak at distances of up to two hundred yards. Mail was not sure protection and the lesser-harnessed foot would suffer terribly. The damage wrought upon Wallace's spearmen at Falkirk is ample testimony to the killing power of the bow deployed in massed formation.

Arrows were made from a variety of woods. Roger Ascham, Elizabeth I's tutor and a noted authority from the much later sixteenth century, advocated aspen as the most suitable, though ash, alder, elder, birch, willow and hornbeam were also utilised. The shafts were generally a 'cloth yard' (thirty-seven inches) in length, the fletching made from grey goose feathers. Arrowheads came in a variety of

forms: flat hammer-headed, barbed, or wickedly sharp needle points (bodkins) to punch through plate. Arrows were described as 'livery' (being issued to retainers), 'standard' (made to a universal specification) and 'sheaf' (as they came in bundles of twenty-four).

The bow was tipped at each end with cowhorn, grooved to take the linen string. When not in use, the stave was carried, unstrung, in a cloth bag. To draw, the archer gripped the bow with his left hand about the middle, where the circumference was around four-and-a-half inches, then he forced the centre of the bow away from him to complete the draw, using the weight of his body to assist rather than relying on the strength in his arms alone. Such expertise required constant training, and practice at the butts was compelled by statute. Long-range shooting was preferred and the bow was effective at over two hundred yards, distinctly superior to the later matchlock musket, which was seldom effective beyond fifty paces. A leather or horn 'bracer' was strapped to the wrist to protect the archer from the snap of the bowstring.

Traditional siege engines, whose design remained unchanged from classical times, such as the ballista and the mangonel dominated siege warfare during the earlier period. The ballista was, in effect, a giant crossbow which hurled a bolt or occasionally stones at the enemy's ramparts. It was intended as an antipersonnel weapon, flensing unwary defenders from the walls and used to cover an assault or escalade.

On both sides of the line, as warfare became endemic in the fourteenth century, gentlemen rebuilt or fortified their residences. A good example is Aydon, near Corbridge in Northumberland, where the Reymes family in the course of the early wars of independence, added a substantial stone curtain wall to their fortified manor house, finished with several strong towers. The era of the border reiver in the sixteenth century saw the development of the Scots' tower house and the distinctive English 'pele' or 'bastle'.[27]

Naval actions certainly took place at this time; the merchantman of the day, only twice as long as it was broad, fat bellied, slow to steer with fixed square mainsail, was the jack of all trades. For the conversion to man o' war, timber 'castles' were fitted fore and aft. Tactics were usually restricted to grappling and boarding, missile power being provided by archers. Even ramming was near impossible

and just as perilous for the aggressor. It was not until the fifteenth century that the earlier medieval vessel, the 'cog', which had been fitted with a steering oar, was replaced by the more sophisticated 'nef' steered by rudder. By the thirteenth century the use of crossbows as on-board missile weapons was commonplace in the Mediterranean, while regular contingents of retained marines were also in evidence. However, both these trends were slower to catch on in northern waters. As fleets engaged with limited manoeuvring, lime was used to blind opponents and soap was employed to render the enemy's decks slippery and treacherous underfoot; thereafter it was a case of grapple and board.

The face of battle

Time and much romantic fiction have cast a shroud of pageantry over the harsh realities of medieval combat, but the truth is somewhat less comforting. Though lacking the scale and devastation of modern wars, devoid of the horrors of machine guns and high explosive, warfare in the middle ages was every bit as frightful. Commanders might, as Bruce did, seek to exhort their men through inspiring oratory, though this is probably much exaggerated by chroniclers, as a general, even if he rode up and down the line, would only be heard by a small proportion at any one time. Morale was, as ever in war, paramount, as the Scots demonstrated at Mytton and other skirmishes after Bannockburn, where their discipline, cohesion and faith in their officers created in their forces a formidable instrument of war. The knight had his years of training, pride in his lineage, the scorn and excoriation of his peers should he waver, to sustain him; the commons had less, much less. Faith too was important, the fourteenth century was an age where faith was paramount. Christendom had yet to be rent by the fires of schism. Early heresies, Bogomils and Cathars, had been ruthlessly and effectively suppressed.[28] However cynically men might act, this did not affect the integrity of their belief. Battle was seen as a manifestation of God's divine will; hearing mass and taking the sacrament were considered imperatives to a man embarking on the hazard of combat.

Our present age, mired in arid secularism, has lost the compelling nature of medieval religiosity, but the validity and importance of faith should not be overlooked. Clerics, though banned from bearing arms,

were frequently to be seen in harness; Anthony Bek, the Prince Bishop who held office from 1283 till his death in 1311, was a significant leader in war.[29] Once battle was joined in earnest the combat became an intensely personal affair, a hacking, stamping mêlée of bills, spears, swords and axes. Men, half blind in armour, soon assailed by raging thirst and fatigue, would swiftly become disorientated. Few would be killed by a single blow, but a disabling wound, bringing the victim to ground, would expose him to more and fatal blows, most likely to the head or the dagger thrust through the visor, a horrible, agonising and by no means speedy end.

Images from the period show fearful injuries as helmets are split and men riven to the navel. More modern tests have shown a stout steel skullcap will resist a shearing blow; nonetheless the carnage at close quarters will have been utterly fearful. Many men died not from blows but from suffocation in the press, as at Dupplin Moor in 1332, or by drowning as they sought to flee over watercourses – hundreds of English corpses clogged the Bannockburn and the Swale at Myton five years later. A battle could be divided into a number of phases. It might commence with an archery duel, with the side that came off worst being forced to advance to contact. The horse would then advance and engage with their opposite numbers or, as at Falkirk and Bannockburn, assault the Scottish spears. When one side broke, dissolving in rout, then the pursuit might be both long and bloody. Men who had staunchly held their ground, giving way to the contagion of panic, casting aside arms and harness, easy meat.

These horrors were repeated on many fields in the Scottish wars, Halidon Hill and Homildon being just two examples. A fourteenth-century work describes how the man-at-arms' bravado rapidly diminishes, the closer to contact he comes:

> When we are in taverns, drinking strong wines, at our sides the ladies we desire, looking on, with their smooth throats … their grey eyes shining back with smiling beauty nature calls on us to have desiring hearts, to struggle awaiting [their] thanks at the end. That we would conquer … Oliver and Roland. But when we are in the field, on our galloping chargers our shields round our necks and lances lowered … and our enemies are approaching us then we would rather be deep in some

cavern.[30]

By our standards, medical services were rudimentary and unreliable. The perceived presence of evil humours was the source of much bleeding of patients; quacks cast horoscopes and prescribed bizarre potions; wounds were cauterised with hot pitch. However, the use of forms of anaesthesia, derived mainly from herbs, was not unknown and surgical techniques were perhaps more advanced, at least in the hands of competent practitioners, than may be imagined. One of the dead from Towton, recently exhumed from a grave pit on the site, showed evidence of a prior and massive facial injury which had been skillfully repaired. Nonetheless, throughout the period northern European medical services lagged far behind those available to both Byzantine and Islamic armies.

As we have seen, most fatal injuries were caused by blows to the head, as the mute remains from grave pits testify: the bodies of the English dead from Otterburn, whose remains were found beneath the nave of Elsdon church in the nineteenth century, from Visby in Sweden (1361), and from Towton. Slashing and stabbing wounds, though ghastly, were not always fatal and more victims probably recovered than might be expected. Complications such as peritonitis or blood poisoning, however, were invariably fatal – many injured would be left lying on the field exposed to the rigours of climate and the tender mercies of scavengers. Campaigns of the period tended to be highly mobile and of relatively short duration, which was undoubtedly a major blessing for the participants for, in medieval wars as a whole, far more men died of disease, particularly dysentery, than from enemy action. Henry V's tattered band that stood at Agincourt was but a pale shadow of the host he had brought from England, the ranks thinned dreadfully by dysentery, rampant in the foetid confines of the siege lines around a beleaguered town or castle.

The lessons of Courtrai

Bannockburn should not be viewed in tactical isolation. Falkirk had shown that effective pairing of missile troops with the shock of heavy horse could break spearmen, even when these were well posted on good ground. The abortive first onslaught by the English cavalry demonstrated how the spears could, if not subjected to a murderous

barrage of arrows, more than hold their own. The failure of the Scottish horse, however, left their own missile troops horribly and fatally exposed.

One engagement which bears striking similarities to Bannockburn is the field of Courtrai (1302). The facts of this battle are worth considering in some detail. A dispute between Philip of France and the worthy burghers of Flanders arose when the former imprisoned Count Guy on a charge of treason and sought to forfeit his lands. The gaoled magnate's son, Guy of Namur, and his cousin, William of Julien, raised a rebel army which ousted most of the French garrisons. This force was mainly comprised of citizens and the rural peasantry, the chivalry of Flanders largely remaining aloof. Robert of Artois, the king's brother in law, was handed the task of recovering the lost towns and suppressing the rebellion. Count Robert commanded a substantial host, the feudal levy in its chivalric glory, supported by mercenary Genoese missile troops and foot from Gascony and the Basque provinces. On 2 July the host crossed into Flanders, obliging the rebels to abandon the leaguer of Cassel and fall back upon a defensive position before the walls of Courtrai, whose garrison remained defiant.

Count Guy had chosen his ground well, though his position backed onto the formidable ramparts with only a couple of very narrow causeways for escape should the position be lost. Retreat was not therefore possible; the Flemings must triumph or face annihilation. Their front was traversed by the Groeninghebeke, not in itself a major water obstacle but the ground around was soft and miry. The line stretched along the Menin–Courtrai road. On the left, the Lys and the bulk of a Franciscan Friary covered the flank, whilst to the right a ditch feeding into the city moat gave protection. The ground down to the river was studded with traps and pits, '*trous de loup*'.

With virtually no cavalry, the foot were formed into a vast phalanx of spears, perhaps a thousand yards across and up to ten men deep. Another 1,200 were left to keep the line of the entrenchments and counter an attempt from the garrison to mount a sally. A small mounted reserve was hidden in dead ground to the rear, a cloud of skirmishers to the fore. Robert of Artois, despising the petty bourgeois flaunting their challenge, disdained manoeuvre and decided upon a frontal assault delivered by the heavy horse. His Genoese

crossbowmen scrimmaged with the Flemings and drove in the skirmishers. Guy pulled his line backwards, no mean feat in itself, to keep the phalanx out of range. The French van, comprising ten squadrons, deployed in three waves and forded the stream, quickly losing cohesion in the wet ground and maze of obstacles.

Now the rebel foot moved steadily forward, driving back the swirling knots of horsemen, who could achieve nothing against the mass of serried points. Robert next committed his main body, himself in the lead. This intervention stemmed the imminent rout of the van and sheer weight of men and horses began to exert pressure on the phalanx as the crisis point approached. Forcing their way in a gap that was opened, victory seemed within the Frenchmen's grasp, but the Flemings' reserve came up and sealed the breach. An attempted sally by the defenders was seen off and the crisis passed. With all impetus lost, the horse were hustled back toward the stream, carpeting the ground with dead men and horses. The burghers fought for a cause rather than reward, no prisoners of rank were spared and the pride of French chivalry fell beneath the stabbing points. Count Robert, three score and more of the gentry and at least seven hundred knights were left dead upon the field.[31]

As an exercise in tactics Courtrai threw up a number of important matters: heavy horse, however valiant, could not best a determined body of spears contesting a narrow front; the defenders must be at pains, to secure their flanks and must keep out of range of missiles. Choosing ground that offered obstacles to the front and augmenting these with field works clearly paid handsome dividends. Robert of Artois, when ordering the advance, commanded his cross-bowmen to withdraw. Some, as at Crecy forty-four years later, were ridden down by the exultant chivalry. As the attack developed his cavalry were without missile support so they were constrained to face well ordered lines of spears, an impenetrable obstacle, which confounded all their best and bravest endeavours.

The Count of Artois showed himself to be a poor general, he eschewed any thoughts of tactical manoeuvre in favour of the charge, an advance over such unfavourable ground as would ensure the horse barely moved faster than a walk and forfeited all cohesion and mass. Shock and awe turned to muddied confusion. Courtrai demonstrated clearly how vital for the attacker were the lessons of Falkirk, the

importance of co-ordinating missile troops with the horse; neither could, of themselves, procure a victory, but used together they would be irresistible. We may surmise with some confidence that Robert Bruce had studied the lessons of both battles, and we may aver with equal confidence that his opponent, Edward II, had not.

Chapter 3
The Longshanks

For those Scots,
I rate 'em as sots,
What a sorry shower!
Whose utter lack
In the attack
Lost 'em at Dunbar
– Contemporary doggerel[1]

The Great Cause

According to the annals of Waverley Abbey, it was in 1291 that Edward I 'Longshanks', informed his council that he intended to assume direct rule of Scotland, to reduce the northern kingdom to the inferior status of a mere province, much as he had done with the Welsh.[2] There were numerous precedents for such authoritarian control; the kings of Wessex had exercised sway over the lesser princes of Scotland and Wales. Edward therefore may have seen himself as a successor to Athelstan or perhaps a new King Arthur, whose cult was already flourishing. It may be, however, that the king merely intended to gather up the reins of power and ensure a smooth transition whilst the interregnum lasted, as a prudent overlord might be expected to do.[3]

Prior to the events of 1291 there appears to have been no suggestion that Edward had any ambition to exert sway over Scotland. Alexander III was his brother-in-law, having married Edward's sister Margaret in 1251, and their relationship was entirely amicable. Indeed the English king seems genuinely to have shared Alexander's grief over the loss of both his sons; the younger boy, David, had died in 1281, aged only eight, and Alexander had barely made it out of his teens when, three years later, he too died. His daughter, Margaret, had been married to Eric II of Norway in 1281 and had departed sorrowfully for her short life in Bergen, which she found cold and

depressing.

Margaret was not destined to see her native land again, dying a mere two years after her marriage, leaving an infant daughter. This sickly child, named after her mother, and clearly no more robust, was the last of the Canmore line and now became Queen of Scots. To ensure a smooth transition in the event of his death (which in 1284, Alexander had reason to hope might lie some years distant), the king, at Scone, had formally confirmed the child as his successor.[5] He would also have reason to hope that his marriage to the nubile Yolande of Dreux, solemnised on the 14 October 1285, ending a decade of widowerhood, might yet produce another male heir.

The king's untimely death, following so soon upon his marriage, confirmed the popular and pessimistic view that a day of judgement was at hand, that what would be seen in retrospect as a golden era would come violently to a close:

> Quehen Alysandyr our King was dede
> That Scotland led in lure and le
> Awaye was sons of ale and brede
>
> Of wyne and wax, of gamyn and gle
> Our gold was changed into lede
>
> Chryst born into vyrgynte
> Succour Scotland and remede
> That stad in perplexite.[6]

For the medieval kingdom, to be without a strong adult ruler was to open the doors to factionalism. For a brief interlude Yolande was able to maintain she was pregnant, but this was soon disproved and the sickly infant in Norway remained the only viable heiress. As an interim measure the governance of the realm was entrusted to a committee of 'Guardians', drawn in pairs from the higher clergy, the magnates and gentry.[7] In the southwest, Bruce's grandfather, the octogenarian 'Competitor', was squaring up to John Baliol, raiding his lands and entering into a band or recognizance with several of his fellow magnates, including from Ireland the 'Red' Earl of Ulster, Thomas de Clare and the MacDonald Lord of the Isles.[8] This accord, the Band of Turnberry, was ostensibly confined to affairs in Ireland

but included a politic nod to Edward I and to 'whoever' became ruler of Scotland.[9]

The Guardians realised they needed the steadying influence of a strong external arbitrator to curtail the incipient violence simmering in the west. There were two obvious candidates. The first was Eric II, king of Norway and the father of the young queen. Eric was, however, distracted by a dispute with Denmark and the favoured choice was, inevitably, Edward I of England. In the circumstances this was a perfectly logical conclusion. Longshanks had experience of acting as an arbitrator in the difficult area of disputed kingship. Unfortunately the Scottish emissaries found the king on the point of departure for Gascony where the deteriorating situation, as he advised, required his full and immediate attention.

Matters therefore were to be left in the hands of the Guardians who took steps against the Competitor's aggression. Faced with such resolve his challenge quickly cooled. Upon his return from France in 1289, Edward proposed a dynastic union between Margaret, 'the Maid of Norway' and Edward of Caernarvon, the Prince of Wales. At a stroke Edward I would have united the whole of mainland Britain as a Plantagenet empire. In that November the prenuptial negotiations began in earnest at Salisbury and an early draft of the proposed treaty, whilst not directly mentioning the marriage alliance, did provide for Edward's intervention in Scotland as mediator and 'honest broker' when matters of such weight as surpassed the competency of the Guardians arose. Eric II had stipulated that his daughter's rights as to sovereignty should not be interfered with.

As the two young people were blood relations, a papal dispensation was needed before any marriage could be finally agreed.[10] In 1290 the Scots Parliament sitting at Birgham approved the draft treaty, though the union could not be solemnised until 1298 when both children were of age. The key question of sovereignty was left rather in abeyance at this juncture; guarantees were expected in terms of territorial integrity and the privileges of the senior clergy. Anthony Bek, the Prince-Bishop of Durham, acted as Edward's senior negotiator.[11] The resultant agreement provided the requisite assurances in relation to Scottish independence which was to endure 'without any subjugation to England'.[12]

If Edward had intentions to bring Scotland directly under his sway

then these were far from obvious. The fact that he clearly placed greater emphasis upon matters in Gascony would tend to suggest that he did not, at that time, have ambitions in Scotland. However, with the marriage treaty now sealed he had no need for haste – with a Plantagenet as her consort the young queen would soon find herself under the powerful influence of her father-in-law. In the king's mind, therefore, the establishment of Plantagenet rule was possibly already a matter of fact.

Edward now wrote to the Guardians intimating he had appointed Bek as his lieutenant in Scotland.[13] The term was perhaps ambiguous; was the Prince Bishop merely an ambassador or a viceroy? The intention was that Bek would hold the administration of Scotland on trust jointly for both Margaret and Caernarvon. On 4 June Edward appointed Walter de Huntercombe as custodian of Man on the basis that the Earl of Ulster had offered the place to the English crown. Later that month Bek was empowered to admit the fissiparous Islesmen into the king's peace.[14] None of this appeared to augur well for the Scots' continuing independence and the Guardians must have been rendered uneasy. They presently had other concerns, however, for the Maid of Norway never saw her throne. In the autumn of 1290, whilst still in Orkney, the unfortunate child sickened and died. There was now no clear heir to the vacant throne and the spectre of civil war emerged, like Banquo's ghost, from the shadows.

On 7 October, Bishop Fraser of St Andrews wrote to the king with the dire news and in fear of civil strife. The magnates, including Bruce the Competitor, had gathered at Perth to await the arrival of the child queen. The Bishop urged Edward to come north to the border with the English host as a deterrent to rival factions, particularly those of Bruce and Baliol. The king was soon presented with another tragedy when, on 28 November, Eleanor of Castile, his wife of thirty-six years, also died. Edward was wracked with grief. The great warrior king turned his back on affairs of state whilst he tried to come to terms with his loss.

It was not until early in the new year that Bishop Bek presented the suggestion to the Guardians that Edward should decide upon the matter of the succession in his capacity as feudal superior. In the meantime, Bruce proposed an allegedly ancient and highly dubious process referred to as 'the Appeal of the Seven Earls of Scotland', a

form of collegiate election. Cannily, the Competitor also hastened to confirm his loyalty to Edward. The Scots Parliament most likely found that arbitration by the king of England was the best means of avoiding internecine conflict. Edward was widely regarded as a leading jurist and the legal procedure which followed marked the beginning of the 'Great Cause', the dispute over not only who should be king of Scots, but whether that king owed homage to the king of England as feudal superior.

The hearings lasted for a full eighteen months, with the court actually in session for a third of that time. Edward ordered that a full record be kept – he did not intend that posterity should accuse him of any partisan leanings. The proceedings were convened at Norham on 10 May 1291, with John of Caen maintaining the record.[15] In his opening address Robert Brabazon, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, required the Scots present to formally recognise Edward as overlord. This request undoubtedly caused consternation and yet from the king's point of view was entirely logical – for him to arbitrate according to feudal custom, his right to act in that capacity had to be accepted by all parties to the dispute. Robert Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow, might have protested at this point and the hearing was adjourned for the Scots representatives to consider their position.

Bishop Wishart may have been the author of the carefully politic response that they were not able to respond on behalf of the nation as such matters were the preserve of the king himself. Edward was therefore required to seek an appropriate undertaking from each of the rival claimants, on the basis such a recognition would, by definition, bind the Guardians. It would, nonetheless be plain that the Scottish polity as a whole did not necessarily consider itself subject to England. The wording of the reply, though diplomatic, carried more than an undertone of defiance: the Guardians 'have no knowledge of your right, nor do they ever see it claimed and used by you or your ancestors'.[16]

In spite of any reservations, Edward seamlessly assumed control of key royal castles. Again there was sense in this for an English presence would deter rival factions. He was also nominally a competitor – even though he sat in judgement, he had not conceded his own, albeit more remote, claim.[17] The Guardians could hand bastions to the king of England in his guise as a candidate and other claimants could do so in

acknowledging Edward as their feudal lord. With the matter of his overlordship still undefined, Edward opened the main court hearing at Berwick in August, with his final judgement not handed down until 17 November 1292. The weight of legal argument was considerable. Both Bruce and Baliol, as leading contenders, were permitted teams of forty representatives or auditors each whilst Edward retained twenty-four. After exhaustive deliberation Edward decided upon Baliol. In law this decision was incontestable, his claim was demonstrably the strongest and, on 19 November, the king instructed that possession or seisin of the realm be given to him.[18]

'Toom Tabard'

John Baliol was now to be crowned king of Scotland, having recognised Edward as his sovereign lord. On 26 December he performed homage for the realm of Scotland. At the coronation Anthony Bek was in attendance whilst John of St John acted as proxy for the infant Earl of Fife. The seal used by the Guardians, now discharged, was formally broken up and the fragments sent to Edward in recognition of his rights. Scotland now had a king but he was not his own man. This act of submission has earned King John almost universal opprobrium from subsequent writers yet, at the time, he really had no alternative. Other competitors, notably Bruce, had shown indecent haste to offer their allegiance to the English king and there was ample precedent: Malcolm Canmore had sworn fealty to William I and the oath had been renewed from time to time by his successors.

It also appeared that Edward was content to allow the governance of Scotland to remain in the hands of the king and his ministers and to refrain from meddling. Even as feudal superior it was assumed Edward was still bound by the guarantees stated in the Treaty of Northampton. On 7 December, before Baliol had even sworn the oath, a Berwick burgess, Roger Bartholemew, appealed to Edward against three judgements found against him in the Guardians' courts. On hearing the appeal the king upheld two and overturned one. The decision sent ripples of alarm back to the Scottish Parliament but Edward made it plain he would continue to hear cases on appeal as he saw fit, even summoning the king of Scots as a party to proceedings if appropriate. As though to underline his own inferior status Baliol

agreed to the annulment of the Treaty of Northampton on 2 January 1293.

If Edward was technically correct in exercising his powers as overlord he showed a total lack of understanding of the Scots and of how fiercely they valued their independence. By the end of the year he had indeed summoned King John to appear before the English courts. The matter was an action brought by MacDuff, a younger son of Malcolm Earl of Fife, alleging false imprisonment and theft of his inheritance. If this was not sufficient provocation then in the following summer Baliol, together with eighteen Scottish magnates, was summoned to perform military service against Philip IV. Such summonses were by no means unprecedented. Edward had previously requested knight service of Scottish nobles in the Welsh wars as a condition of their homage for lands they held in England.[19] From Edward's perspective, Baliol's position was now the same, though service was now due for the kingdom of Scotland. Malcolm IV had served Henry II on the same terms in 1159. In the event a general muster proved unnecessary when the Earl of Warwick defeated the Welsh rebels in March 1295.

Fresh disturbances, arising in Wales, frustrated Edward's plans to campaign against Philip but the fact he had demanded service from Baliol undermined the latter's position in Scotland. King John's inability to stand up to the king of England had begun to anger the representatives of the community who, at a Parliament convened in Stirling in July 1295, appointed a council of twelve (four bishops, four earls and four barons) to better advise the king or rather afford him that measure of backbone which appeared to be lacking. The council were undoubtedly the driving force behind overtures for a treaty of mutual support to be entered into with Philip IV. The delegation which travelled to France to negotiate comprised the bishops of St Andrews and Dunkeld, John de Soules and Ingram de Umfraville. The terms of the accord were agreed on 23 October and included provisions for mutual defensive and offensive action.

As an incentive there was the offer of a marriage alliance, King John to marry Jeanne de Valois, the king's niece. Even accepting the difficulties of his position there has to be some question as to Baliol's suitability for kingship. Furthermore there is doubt as to whether he was imbued with any great desire for the role. Later, in comfortable

captivity, he is said to have admitted to Bek, his host that 'When he possessed and ruled the realm of Scotland as king and lord of the realm, he found in the men of that realm such malice, deceit, treason, and treachery, arising from their malignity, wickedness, and stratagems, and various other execrable and detestable actions'.[20]

To anyone as literally minded as Edward this dealing with France was treason. Baliol had yet to appear to respond in the MacDuff case and he had failed to hand over the three key castles demanded as a surety for his non-attendance. In law, Longshanks was now justified in resorting to force of arms. As proof of his resolve he appointed Bek and Earl Warenne as his deputies for all of the counties north of the Trent; Warenne was also given custody of Berwick (still in Scottish hands at this point) and Bruce, the Earl of Carrick, clearly no supporter of Baliol, was entrusted with Carlisle. On 16 October, Edward I as feudal superior formally demanded the surrender of the fortresses of Berwick, Roxburgh and Jedburgh. He also confiscated Baliol's lands in England. In December the king sent out writs summoning the host to appear at Newcastle by 1 March 1296. A state of open war was now imminent.

Open defiance was the Scottish response. Early in 1296 a general muster or *wapinschaw* (i.e. 'weapons show' or 'show of weapons') was proposed and the host called out for 11 March at Caddonlea near Selkirk. A wave of anti-English sentiment swept the country. English clergy were ousted and merchants harassed. At Berwick some sailors were said to have been murdered. Through his arrogance and high-handedness Edward had produced a degree of political unity in Scotland not seen since the appointment of the Guardians. The Bruce faction and the other pro-English magnates had no popular support; the political revolution of July 1295 illustrates just how determined the Scots had become to assert their independence.

The army which Edward I mustered to deal with his troublesome vassal was doubtless a large one. His expenditure incurred in the raising and maintaining of forces amounted to the very considerable sum of £21,443 12s, although this figure also included the costs associated with the troops then operating in Gascony.[21] On 23 January he had requested sufficient funds from the Exchequer to recruit 1,000 men-at-arms and a staggering 60,000 foot. If this were not enough, the Red Earl was commanded to provide a further 400

men-at-arms and 30,000 foot (in fact the Irish who mustered at Roxburgh on 13 May were barely ten per cent of this requirement).[22]

On 5 March the English army marched north out of Newcastle. Edward had arranged for the collection of the sacred banner of St John of Beverley to provide the requisite spiritual uplift. The Scots, wary of the size of the host coming against them and equally wary of the king's formidable military reputation, (in fact the last pitched battle in which Edward had led had been Evesham in 1265), had opted for a defensive strategy based on holding the border line itself. James the Steward held Roxburgh whilst William Douglas commanded at Berwick. The Scottish army was most assuredly not led by King John, now relegated to the role of hapless spectator. Command was in the hands of a general staff comprising seven earls: John Comyn of Buchan, Alexander Stewart of Menteith, Malise of Strathearn, Malcolm of Lennox, William of Ross, John Strathbogie of Athol and Donald of Mar. Prior to what would now be termed a pre-emptive strike the army moved into Annandale, Bruce's confiscated estates having been passed to Buchan. On 26 March, advancing in three columns, the Scots entered the English west march. From the outset this war was marked by a degree of merciless savagery that was to become all too familiar to marchers on both sides.

The land around Carlisle was thoroughly wasted and the city itself imperilled when a Scots spy managed to start a fire within the walls. The flames spread to a dangerous extent but the women took position on the ramparts whilst their menfolk fought the blaze. Two days later the Scots withdrew. Beyond burnt thatch and empty byres the raid had achieved nothing; moreover it had provided the moral justification Edward needed to assume the offensive. It was also on 28 March that the English crossed the Tweed and appeared before the walls of Berwick. The castle was formidable and Douglas, a name to reckon with, was no mean soldier.

Berwick's ramparts comprised nothing more substantial than a hastily repaired timber palisade with earthen ramparts and ditches. Despite the paucity of their defences the townsfolk remained defiant in the face of Edward's formal demand for unconditional surrender. Their replies were at best pithy, enlivened by obscenities and familiar gestures. Such conduct might provide inspiration for modern film makers but it was not the stuff of chivalry and such brimming

overconfidence in the face of so potent an invader was to prove fatal. Edward was not a ruler noted for his sense of humour.

> King Edward wanne thu havest Berwick pike the
> Wanne thu havest geten dike the[23]

With due formality thus concluded the English host moved to leaguer the walls. In accordance with custom the king dubbed a number of new knights. The associated cheers and flaunting of banners persuaded the fleet lying in the Tweed estuary that an escalade was in progress and several vessels moved in to support. This proved unfortunate. The first ship ran aground and was promptly set on fire by the defenders, the crew cut down to a man, while the second was also engulfed in flames but the sailors managed to get off in the boats. First blood to the townsmen, but they did not have long to savour their success. A general assault from the landward side swiftly exposed the inadequacy of the wooden palisade, which was overcome, and the defenders pushed back into the narrow streets amidst scenes of frightful slaughter. Edward's men-at-arms, experienced in the Welsh and Gascon wars, had been quick to spot a weakness in the makeshift ramparts: 'where the townsfolk had made a path along the fosse, [the English] entered pell mell with those on horseback, whoever could get in first'.[24]

Resistance collapsed. Only a squad of determined Flemings, no more than thirty strong, held out in the Red Hall until it was burnt down around them. The attackers generally suffered few casualties although the young Richard of Cornwall, a son of the king's uncle, was amongst them, having unwisely lifted his helm to obtain a better view of the progress of the assault and receiving a fatal bolt for his pains. Although the women and children who survived the initial holocaust were permitted to depart, a significant proportion of the male population was left dead in the ashes, an atrocity which the Scots were never to forget. The castle surrendered on terms but the intransigent Douglas was to remain a captive.

Despite the fall of Berwick, Northumberland was not to escape unscathed. On 8 April, Ross, Menteith, Athol and Comyn of Badenoch launched a raid from Jedburgh against Redesdale, Coquetdale and Tynedale. The attack was stopped at Harbottle where the Umfraville

castle resisted two days of assault but the Scots proved themselves the equals of the English in terms of fright-fulness:

> They imbued their arms, hitherto unfleshed, with the blood of infirm people, old women, women in childbed, and even children two or three years old, proving themselves apt scholars in atrocity, in so much so that they raised aloft little span-long children pierced on pikes[25]

Having achieved no more with their second raid the Scots withdrew, falling back through Lothian and Teviotdale, gathering their resources to attempt to relieve the siege of Dunbar being undertaken by Earl Warenne. The castle was in the ownership of Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March, an English sympathiser serving with Edward at Berwick, but his defiant countess, a patriot, had taken advantage of his absence to open the gates to a Scottish force.

Undeterred by the prospect of facing the relieving army, which appeared around noon on 27 April, Warenne drew up ready to accept battle, leaving a masking force to contain the defenders. The Scots appeared over the brow of Spottismuir and Warenne, whose men were mainly mounted, moved forward to seek contact at the crossing of the Spot Burn which ran along the anticipated front line of both armies. The Scots mistook this manoeuvre for flight and whooped down for the chase. Warenne's charge smashed home, scattering the Scots and capturing most of their leaders. The fight dissolved into a rout and the Scottish army disintegrated.

For the hapless King John, this reverse, following upon the fall of Berwick, proved fatal. The English advance was now unopposed and Baliol was made to digest the full weight of his humiliation at Montrose, his coat of arms torn from him and flung to the ground, earning him the enduring sobriquet of 'Toom Tabard' – in the words of the chronicler Wyntoun:

> This Johun the Balliol dispoyilyeide he
> Offal his robis and ryalte.
> The pellour that tuk out of his tabart,
> Tuyme Tabart he was callit efftirwart;
> And all other insignyis

That fel to kynge on any wise,
Baythe septure, suerde, crowne and rynge,
Fra this Johun, that he made kynge,

Hallely fra hym he tuk thar,
And mad hym of his kynrik bare[26]

Scotland was now no longer a kingdom, it was to be an English province, administered by a crown officer with vice-regal powers. Warenne was to be governor and the relics of kingship, the Stone of Destiny and the Black Rood of St Margaret were to be carried off to England as the spoils of conquest. A timid approach from the Earl of Carrick was met by a snarling royal rebuke[27] and the king is credited with a short, telling summary of his feelings towards Scotland when finally handing over the reins of government to Warenne: 'A man does good business when he rids himself of a turd'.[28] Before Edward left, all men of rank were obliged to swear an oath of allegiance at Berwick, the 'Ragman Roll'. The name of Malcolm Wallace of Elderslie is not on the roll, nor is that of his younger brother William; the estate of the elder brother was not a large one and William as the junior had no lands of his own. It is quite likely that Edward had never heard the name of William Wallace. If he had not then he would be hearing it a great deal in the following year.

Braveheart

William Wallace's earliest biographer was the poet Blind Harry, who died around 1385 but who likely relied upon more contemporary sources now lost. Blind Harry's version of his hero's life is written on an epic scale as befits his subject and may tend to sensationalise certain events. It is not possible to determine the exact year of William's birth though it is certain he was still a young man, possibly very young, in 1297. Wallace simply erupts onto the political scene in May of that year with the slaughter of the hated William Heselrig, the English sheriff of Lanark. This may have been a calculated act of terrorism designed to unsettle the invader or an act of vengeance for the death, at Heselrig's hands or by his order, of the hero's lover, Marion Braidfute. She perished horribly with her family and retainers when the sheriff, frustrated in his efforts to capture the daring young outlaw, ordered her house to be burnt down.

> Gathering together a band of desperate men, he fell by night on the sheriff and his armed guard, hewed the sheriff into small pieces with his own sword and burned the buildings and those within them … For the first time one of the high officials of the hated conquerors had been slain and a ripple of jubilation spread throughout the oppressed.[29]

Wallace was beyond doubt a born leader, a doughty fighter and a savage opponent. Physically strong, morally resolute, he did not shirk frightfulness. He was a dark warrior in a dark time.[30] Warenne was the king's lieutenant, assisted by Hugh Cressingham as treasurer and Walter of Amersham as chancellor, with the chief justiciar being William Ormsby. There is evidence that Warenne was less than zealous in his duties, preferring the relative comfort of his English estates. He was also ageing and his reactions during the coming conflagration were at best sluggish and lacking in that dash and élan he had displayed at Dunbar.

Having been the first to raise the flag of rebellion, Wallace unleashed the stirrings of discontent which had hitherto lacked any focus. Bruce was one who joined with both Wishart and the Steward. Responsibility for cowing these rebels was given to Henry Percy from Yorkshire and the Cumbrian knight, Robert Clifford.[31] Theirs was an effective partnership and before June was out they had penetrated as far as Ayr, both Bruce and the Steward sought terms; neither had struck a blow. Undeterred by this craven collapse, Wallace and his growing band of bandits cum guerrillas were sallying out from their lair in Selkirk Forest to wage war on English outposts. In the northeast Andrew Murray, son of Sir Andrew Murray of Petty, one of those knights who had been taken at the rout of Dunbar, also raised the flag of freedom.

Initially these outbreaks were not coordinated but by August Wallace was strong enough to take on the English garrison of Glasgow, commanded by the redoubtable Bishop Bek. After an extended skirmish the English came off worst and the Prince Bishop was obliged to retire behind the walls of Bothwell Castle. The English were to be expelled from Scotland, driven from their offices and benefices. Few who did not reach the shelter of the occupying garrisons were to leave alive. In the words of the English chronicler:

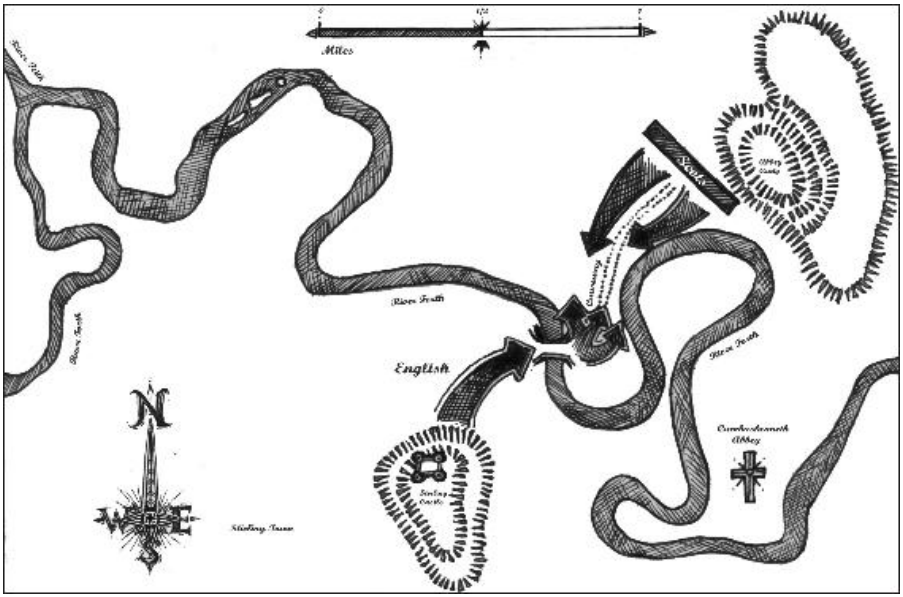
> They [the Scots] took old men, priests and women of the English nation (whom they had specially kept alive for the purpose) to bridges over the rivers; and when they had tied their hands or feet together so that they could not swim, they threw them or pushed them into the water, laughing and jeering as they struggled and went under.[32]

Warenne was obliged to begin a muster of troops to confront the swelling tide of revolt. By late summer Wallace and Murray had joined forces at Stirling and it was to be there that the inevitable confrontation took place. The Scottish forces, devoid of magnate support, were under the joint command of both guerrilla captains. Though their partnership was not destined to be a long one it appears to have been entirely amicable. In the first week of September the English, led by Warenne but with the increasing meddling of the obese treasurer, Cressingham, reached the town to find the patriots strongly posted to the north of the Forth. It is likely that the Scots had deployed a mile or so northeast of the wooden bridge spanning the river; this stood perhaps fifty yards upstream from the later sixteenth-century structure.

The bulk of their forces were drawn up on lower south-facing slopes of the Abbey Craig, which dominated the crossing point. From the high ground a timber causeway ran down to the bridge, the flatlands about being waterlogged meadow pasture, while a loop in the river covered the Scottish left. The position was a very strong one, ideal for defence, the bridge narrow and unsuitable for heavy horse. It is not possible to estimate with any semblance of accuracy the number of patriots Wallace and Murray commanded or even how many English they were facing. The Scots might have been three to four thousand strong, their opponents perhaps twice that number. Muttering about cost savings Cressingham had sent a detachment back!

When writing earlier to Edward, the treasurer had intimated that he had collected a force of three hundred horse and ten thousand foot, though the latter is very likely an exaggeration.[33] On past performance there was every reason to suspect that the patriots would not fight: the magnates, these men's feudal superiors, had crumbled easily enough in the confrontation at Irvine, they lacked heavy cavalry

and had few men-at-arms. It is no mean testament to the grit and determination of these two young men that they refused to be cowed by the presence of an English field army. Murray had witnessed the debacle at Dunbar, neither had ever commanded troops in pitched battle, the nobility had scarcely created an encouraging precedent.



Stirling Bridge, 11 September 1297.

Conflicting orders were given and a commanded party of mounted and dismounted men-at-arms was dispatched over the bridge. Presumably it was hoped that this manoeuvre would either tempt the Scots into abandoning their strong position and attacking or, being overawed, they would flee. Instead, the Scots launched a brilliantly-executed charge, hacking down knights and men-at-arms as they struggled to gain a lodgement. The Welsh, less encumbered, took to the water.

The press of men now trying to cross to succour their doomed comrades may have sufficed to bring down the wooden structure or the patriots might already have carried out some sabotage, but the wooden bridge collapsed beneath the great weight of armoured men and horses. Those already on the north bank were, for the most part, slaughtered. Cressingham, the hated tax gatherer, never lived to make the final audit, his gross carcass flayed by the vengeful patriots. Warenne seems to have lost his nerve completely, falling back upon Berwick with almost indecent haste, leaving Tweng to hold Stirling castle.

Edward had seriously misjudged the extent of the Scots capitulation. Insofar as the Community of the Realm was concerned, his domination of the magnates was unchallenged, the brief flurry of revolt that ended in humiliation at Irvine showed he was on firmer ground with the nobility. The notion of a popular rising led by sons of the minor gentry is unlikely to have featured in his calculations. Uppermost in his mind during the spring and summer of 1297 were the difficulties he faced in Gascony. Here two brigades were operating and these had had no reinforcement since being dispatched in the preceding January. One of the commanders had since died and the survivor, the Earl of Lincoln, was now hard pressed. Pushed onto the defensive he had been worsted at Bellegarde at the start of 1297. Anxious to relieve this pressure, Edward signed an accord with Guy of Flanders for mutual support but was desperately short of cash from which to fund additional troops.

The cost burden of the king's wars had severely squeezed the exchequer and increases in taxation were resented. In February 1296 Pope Boniface had issued a bull entitled '*Clericis Laicos*' which purported to prohibit the crown from taxing ecclesiastical revenues. Such a measure was bound to produce such howls of pain from

impecunious monarchs that it had to be withdrawn, but the spirit of the edict was kept alive in England by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Winchelsea. Edward ruthlessly countered the prelate's intransigence by outlawing the entire clergy who were then obliged to purchase a return to the umbrella of state protection, the consideration being equal to the amount of tax otherwise due. Such bullying cowed several of the leading clergy but not the archbishop, who remained boldly defiant.

The senior clergy were not alone in expressing their resentment of the king's autocratic style. Secular opposition was led by Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, and the Earl of Hereford, Humphrey Bohun. Hereford, hereditary Earl Marshal and Constable, refused to serve abroad, despite threats from the king that his life would be forfeit. The earls knew this belligerence to be mere bluster as the king could not and almost certainly did not intend to make good on these threats. At the Salisbury Parliament in late February the rift widened to include Norfolk. Longshanks' position was increasingly untenable; he could not seek to prosecute foreign adventures and quell disturbances in Scotland whilst at war with both barons and bishops. In the end he was obliged to temporise, to seek an accommodation and be reconciled with his archbishop whilst promising the magnates that service overseas would be a matter of contract rather than obligation.

For Edward, the disaster at Stirling, whilst a signal humiliation, was not entirely devoid of benefit, the shock wave convinced both clergy and laity of the need for recompense from these upstart rebels. When Parliament met early in 1298 at Bury St Edmunds, Edward was voted a twelfth from the shires and an eighth from the towns. The clergy, asked for a fifth, vacillated. In Scotland, Wallace had not been idle. One of the casualties of Stirling was Murray himself who suffered wounds which were to prove fatal before the year was out. His injuries were such that he was unable to play any real part in the governance of the country in the wake of the English collapse. Wallace's strategy was now to capitalise upon victory and carry the war into northern England.

In the autumn he struck at Northumberland. Each man mounted on a sturdy garron, carrying everything he would need, fast moving, able to live off the land, strong enough to discourage any sporadic local opposition, fleet enough to avoid organised pursuit. These

tactics, the hallmark of the successful guerrilla fighter, were totally effective. Terror, like a rampant virus, spread throughout the marches:

> the service of God totally ceased in all the monasteries and churches between Newcastle and Carlisle, for all the canons, monks and priests fled before the face of the Scots, as did nearly all the people.[34]

Tynedale was hard hit, as were both Coquetdale, and Redesdale. The Priory at Hexham had not been totally abandoned; it is said that three of the canons had remained, possibly in hiding. When discovered by Scots they were jostled and abused as the raiders demanded the surrender of the abbey's valuables. The harassed clergy retorted that there was nothing left to steal. Shamefaced Wallace could only offer the canons' a letter of protection. He suggested he would like to hang the culprits but admitted such elements of his army were hard to control.[35]

It was then Cumberland's turn to feel the heat of the Scots passage with empty byres, smouldering thatch and the corpses of the slain stiffening in the ruins of their pastures. Wallace did make a demonstration against Carlisle, his emissary a priest who boldly summoned the city to surrender: 'William the Conqueror whom I serve, commands you to give up this town and castle without bloodshed; then you may leave unharmed with all your goods'.[36]

The citizens were not impressed. The Scots had no engines of war and though formidable in the field lacked the specialist skills and resources to crack so tough a nut as Carlisle. The bluff having failed, Wallace moved south of the city to beat up the settlements in and around the Inglewood Forest before swinging eastwards to fall upon Durham via Stainmoor.

Wallace, now dubbed as a knight, became sole Guardian. His task was not an easy one. He owed his position to the prestige of his victory at Stirling and all that he did was in the name of King John. This was not likely to appeal to the Bruce faction and Wallace was without a political faction of his own. From the start of the year he was keenly aware that the test of his office would come in the summer when the English invaded. To prepare for such a conflict required a major effort on a national scale – a field army had to be created and

made ready to withstand Longshanks himself, the greatest commander of his age whose experience of warfare vastly exceeded that of Wallace and who, baronial and ecclesiastical dissent notwithstanding, had a far greater pool of resources.

It was inevitable that the backbone of the army would be infantry, spearmen for the most part, lightly armoured if at all, who would stand in their '*schiltrons*' to withstand the charge of mounted chivalry. Magnificent as the triumph at Stirling had been, Wallace would be well aware that the incompetence of the English command, their lack of cohesion and contempt had all played a part in delivering his enemy to him. He could hope for no such boon in the coming campaign.

The English muster was listed for Roxburgh on 25 June and the numbers were impressive, perhaps as many as 3,000 cavalry, 10,900 Welsh foot and 14,800 from England.[37] It was one thing to get men on the payroll, quite another to keep them there. Edwardian armies suffered very high levels of desertion; wounds and disease accounted for others. Precise numbers are, of course, impossible to provide, but in terms of suggesting how many actually took part in the battle to come, it would not be unreasonable to halve the totals for the English and Welsh foot. The king was also careful to ensure the army was not without spiritual leadership – he raised the banner of St John of Beverley and that of St Cuthbert.

By July the English army was lumbering through the Lothians, the fleet keeping pace off the east coast. Bek had been detailed to capture Dirleton and a couple of outposts but the Scots did not appear to offer battle. Despite the habitual thoroughness of Edward's logistical planning, food began to run short – a large army on the move is a hungry beast, needing fresh meat and corn, small beer, ale and wine (the former was scarcely a luxury as most water was unfit for drinking). At one point the fleet was able to offload several tuns of wine. Strong drink and empty stomachs are a bad mix and contributed to an unseemly fracas between the English and the Welsh. By the third week of the month matters had become serious and Edward, facing a will o' the wisp opponent, would have to start thinking of retreat.

Two Scottish lords in his service, Gilbert Umfraville and Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March, brought intelligence that they had espied the Scottish host encamped less than fifteen miles away by Callendar

Wood.[38] The English spent the short summer night bivouacked to the east of Linlithgow, confident that battle would be joined the following day. In the night Edward's destrier broke free and trampled its master, severely bruising his ribs. A lesser man might have taken this as an ill omen; the king, as one might suppose, merely gritted his teeth.

To commit to the full hazard of battle is always dangerous. Wallace, in reality, had never fought a major engagement in open field. The victory at Stirling, impressive as it was had been opportunistic, brilliantly so, but represents an extension of guerrilla activity. Now he chose his ground with care, his forces deployed on the southern flank of the wood, their front crossed by the fast-flowing burn which at its confluence with another stream running downhill from Glen village created a marshy plain, difficult to detect but largely impassable to heavy cavalry. The foot, made up from the general levy of adult males aged between sixteen and sixty, were formed into four commanded brigades of perhaps fifteen hundred men each. These *schiltrons* bristled with a hedge of iron-tipped twelve-foot spears, front rank kneeling, second rank with staves levelled over the shoulders of the first. Each was encircled with a line of stakes, roped or chained together, creating a makeshift palisade.

Perhaps the prime purpose of these defensive formations was to resist the English chivalry. Wallace did have horsemen but they were few. He also had a contingent of bowmen under Sir John Stewart whose function was to provide missile troops to shield the spearmen from the lethal volleys from Edward's English and Welsh archers. The Scottish horse were there to protect the missile troops deployed in the open between the *schiltrons* from being ridden down. These dispositions were all sound but suffered from several telling flaws. The mounted arm, regardless of their subsequent conduct, were, from the outset, at a significant numerical disadvantage. In the shock of impact, as the mounted charge thundered home, their survival was precarious. Without them, however, the bowmen were exposed – if the archers were routed then the *schiltrons*, who need not fear cavalry if they held firm, were, in turn, horribly vulnerable to the arrow storm.

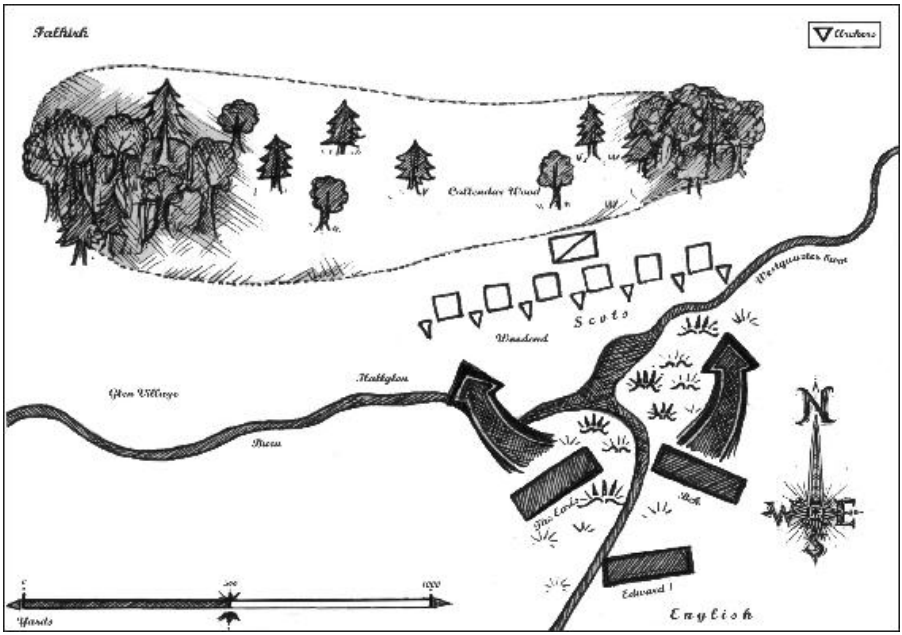
The bristling hedgehogs of spears were protected to their front by the morass but this, in turn, would impede them if they tried to advance. The *schiltron*, like the Macedonian phalanx, was intended as an offensive as well as a defensive formation. Indeed, when faced by

missile troops, the spearmen had to be able to advance swiftly to contact or be shot down where they stood. It may be that Wallace did not feel sufficiently confident in the training of his men to contemplate offensive manoeuvring.

A brace of English earls, those of Norfolk and Hereford commanded the van – a politic selection as these magnates had been amongst the king's most vociferous opponents, Bek led the centre whilst Edward himself commanded the rear. The earls, hungry for glory and not mindful to attend upon the baser bowmen as they loosed, spurred into a precipitate charge. The morass rather spoiled their move and similarly discommoded the Prince Bishop, both wings being obliged to echelon sharply to avoid the obstacle. Once the horse came to contact they met a resolute hedge of spears, the attack faltered.

Bishop Bek, in similar difficulties, began a very public row with his second in command Ralph Bisset, who would have none of his superior's caution. Although these attacks could not budge the *schiltron*s, the weight of English horse served to unman the Scots knights who promptly turned tail and fled the field. Sir John Stewart and his gallant bowmen were slaughtered. Edward now took control, recalling the cavalry and advancing his archers and Gascon cross-bowmen. These had a perfect target: though they had seen off the horse, the spearmen had no protection against missile troops and the arrow storm burst upon them.

Untried, largely untrained, mostly unarmoured and now unsupported, the *schiltron*s nonetheless held their ground, even as their casualties mounted, gaps appearing in the line as men fell and reserves were used up. By mere valour they stood firm but, judging the moment, Edward called a halt to the barrage and sent the cavalry back into the assault. The *schiltron*s, dreadfully thinned, could no longer maintain their unbroken line. The knights hacked and battered their way through the spears, slashing and trampling. Hundreds died: 'they fell like blossoms in an orchard when the fruit has ripened'.[39]



Falkirk, 22 July 1298.

Failure was palpable and costly but not shameful, not a debacle such as Dunbar. Wallace's untried militia had fought well and died hard, the *schiltrons* had succeeded in holding off heavy cavalry, a significant achievement and one which the English were to forget. The 'what might have been'' was probably not much considered in the rush of victory but the heavy horse had little to celebrate. The spears had, in reality, been broken by missile troops. Had the *schiltrons* been able to move forward rapidly and attack, the outcome might have been very different. The Scots learnt from the defeat at Falkirk, the English did not.

A great battle had been won, the disaster at Stirling avenged and the upstart Wallace driven back into the hills. This did not imply that the war was necessarily over, however. The Guardian was neither dead nor taken and Edward himself was not free of political difficulties. His earlier opponents, Norfolk and Hereford, had agreed to serve only on the understanding that the king would honour his earlier concessions – both men knew Edward of old and probably suspected that, in the flush of success, the king might be tempted to renege on his earlier undertakings. This tension was exacerbated when, still at Carlisle, Edward granted the lordship of Arran to Thomas Bisset, an Irish peer from Antrim. Both magnates now left the army but the king was bent on further distributions of confiscated Scottish estates. He did refrain from granting lands in Annandale and Galloway so as to avoid further alienating Norfolk and Hereford, but he still gave Caerlaverock to Clifford and the Steward's estates went to the Earl of Lincoln. A number of these dispositions were made more in expectation than in reality.[40]

After sustaining so great a defeat as Falkirk, Wallace could not hope to remain in office as Guardian and he relinquished the post. As a commoner he could not fall back upon an established affinity, who might still form the nucleus of a viable faction. His position rested upon prowess and prestige, without one he must lose the other. His relationship with Bruce is uncertain, as indeed is the latter's role, if any, in the battle. The defeat had robbed him and Scotland of a viable field army. This did not operate in any way to prevent Wallace resuming the life of a bandit cum guerrilla which he had pursued so successfully before. The immediate following of diehards who clung to him would not desert him now. The next year he left Scotland on a

form of diplomatic mission to the continent, first attending the court of Philip IV and in 1300 perhaps journeying as far as Bergen for an audience with Haakon V.

Despite the earlier accord between France and Scotland, relations had now cooled and Philip had come to an agreement with Edward in June 1299 at Montreuil-sur-Mer incorporating a proposed union between the widower Edward and Philip's sister Margaret. There is a suggestion therefore that the French king found the Scots emissary something of an embarrassment and even offered to detain Wallace in France.[41] If this proposal was made then perhaps the Scots got wind of it and wisely decamped beforehand. At this time there is no particular evidence to suggest that Edward bore Wallace any marked ill will – the furious vengeance he was to pursue seems to have arisen later.

In 1299, Longshanks was aware that the victory at Falkirk had not entirely crushed resistance and whilst the patriots might be cowed they were not yet submissive. His plans for a further campaign in that year were frustrated by politics in both England and France, leading up to his accord with Philip which would leave him free to pursue a more proactive role in 1300. Bruce and John Comyn of Badenoch had been appointed as joint guardians, a partnership that veered between covert and outright antagonism. Comyn was a Baliol partisan, as Wallace had been, whilst Bruce was considerably less enthusiastic, being far more concerned with his own advancement. During August, at a meeting in Peebles the hostility between these volatile lords erupted into violence, with blows exchanged and daggers drawn. The argument had been fuelled by a dispute over the legality of Wallace's departure for France. His brother Malcolm was present and clearly seems to have been aligned with Bruce, notwithstanding that the Steward was his feudal superior.

Once tempers had cooled it was recognised that the continued partnership had no future and Bishop Lamberton of St Andrews was elected as Guardian, with Bruce and Comyn acting as deputies under his direction. William Lamberton was a determined patriot, an ally of Wallace who, as Guardian, had lobbied for his elevation when the existing incumbent had died in 1297. Lamberton was also closely identified with Bishop Wishart of Glasgow. He leaned more towards Bruce than Comyn and indeed had grappled with Buchan in the course of the unseemly fracas at Peebles.

At the time his sponsor Wallace was suffering disaster at Falkirk, the Bishop of St Andrews was on a diplomatic mission to lobby support from the Pope. He was regarded as sufficiently dangerous to merit an unsuccessful attempt to intercept and capture him whilst on the return journey. Patriot sentiment was therefore divided between those who wholeheartedly fought for King John and those who despaired of their king but accepted his role as a necessary figure-head. In one respect the eclipse of Wallace strengthened the patriot cause in that the nobility, who would not deign to serve under a commoner, would be easier with guardians drawn from the magnate class and more likely to relinquish their allegiance to the king of England.

Under the 'Hammer'

In reality the English grip was truly effective only in the southeast, the Lothians and the Merse, with a powerful garrison stationed at Berwick – as many as one hundred men-at-arms, a thousand foot and a further hundred crossbowmen.[42] Wallace's chevauchée in 1297 had shown the vulnerability of the English marches and Edward had been at pains to prevent a repeat. Successful captains such as Robert Clifford, William Latimer, Robert Hastangs, John of St John and Patrick Dunbar were appointed to key positions. The Scot, Dunbar, Earl of March, was given a commission to hold down his countrymen south of the Forth whilst Clifford held the English west march and Walter de Huntercombe the east. Nonetheless Caerlaverock fell to the patriots which left Lochmaben isolated. There was a skirmish between the two garrisons in which the Scots appear to have been worsted and an attempt to besiege Lochmaben came to nothing.

Frustrated by being unable to control events, Edward rather rashly determined upon a winter campaign in November 1299. Support from the magnates was lacking and the king's summons for a muster of 16,000 foot at Newcastle produced no more than 2,500, most of whom quickly deserted. The projected campaign proved farcical and failed to prevent the fall of Stirling, a major boost to the patriot cause. Edward resolved upon a major effort during the summer of 1300 and the summons sent out from Carlisle at the end of the year show that some forty knights and 366 sergeants were called up for unpaid feudal service, these were augmented by some three score of gentlemen

volunteers with their affinities, perhaps ten–twelve men per squad or 'lance'. The Royal Household contained over 500 on retainer, boosted by recruitment to perhaps 850, all mounted.[43]

The army was marshalled into the usual four divisions, the first under the Earl of Lincoln, the second Earl Warenne, next the king's brigade and lastly that under the nominal command of Edward of Caernarvon, then only sixteen years old. Actual command in the field was exercised by John of St John.[44] The foot contingents were raised by commissions of array from Nottinghamshire, Derby and the four northern counties. A total of 16,000 infantry was required but perhaps just more than half of that number actually mustered at Carlisle. No Welsh were recruited. The king could clearly recall the difficulties of the Falkirk campaign and his remarks concerning his Welsh subjects, heavy with irony, do support the view that he was not entirely devoid of humour: 'We have given them leave to remain at home, because of all the great work which they have done in our service in the past'.[45]

This great array was fed by an enormous logistical effort. Thirty ships from the Cinque Ports responded to the feudal summons but their unpaid service was limited to a fortnight and thereafter the 1,106 men who crewed these vessels were to be retained on wages. A further squadron of fifteen lighter vessels and a couple of galleys were also chartered. Provisions from Ulster were carried in a further flotilla of eight Irish craft which plied the narrow sea to Carlisle. The link between England's westerly bastion and Northern Ireland was well established and the ports of Ulster were a major source of re-supply for the Carlisle garrison (the Irish vessels also conveyed 300 tuns of wine).[46]

The field army marched from Carlisle on 4 July, advancing by Annan to Ecclefechan, swinging westward to Lochmaben and Dumfries before approaching the red sandstone walls of Caerlaverock, held by a patriot garrison. For five days Edward's men-at-arms made repeated and totally futile assaults and each escalade was thrown back. This was mere knightly horseplay: the real work was done by the siege engines. These great trebuchets hurled hundred-weight boulders clear over the ramparts to smash down into the courtyard and buildings below, pulverising timber-framed structures and sending lethal slivers of stone flying like shrapnel. The sixty-odd defenders capitulated. No terms were offered and most were imprisoned – rebels

did not figure in the chivalric code.

Capturing the castle of Caerlaverock, important as it was, amounted to a very poor return for such heavy expenditure, but the campaign was dogged by foul weather and the patriots cannily refused battle. Buchan, together with his kinsman Comyn of Badenoch, attempted to open negotiations for a truce when the royal army, wet, filthy and with the foot deserting in droves, tramped into Kirkcudbright. Their demands reflected a not inconsiderable level of confidence – they required the return of King John together with restitution of forfeited estates.

The talks stalled as the English infantry continued to melt away – fresh recruits, en route to Carlisle were deserting before they even saw the marches![47] The cavalry managed to win a skirmish against a Scots force led by Robert Keith the Marischal whose attempt to 'beat up' a foraging party by the banks of the River Cree was forestalled and he himself was taken captive. After the negotiations foundered the Scots appeared in force and a further confrontation took place, with both armies facing each other over the Cree. The Comyns were joined by Ingram Umfraville. The stand-off continued for a while, with neither side taking the offensive. Ironically it was the despised and depleted English foot who began the action by advancing, presumably without orders. The horse was drawn in after and a desultory combat ensued.

This was not an occasion when Scottish arms earned distinction, rather they fled like a summer haze, leaving their baggage and supplies, melting back into the sheltering hills and mosses. It was perhaps at this point the king missed his nimble-footed Welshmen who could have turned the precipitate withdrawal into a costly rout. If the Scots were embarrassed they were certainly undefeated and there was little more for Edward to do. As the fine rain continued to fall the army moved, on 16 August, to Wigton, but the campaign was effectively over. By the end of the month the king was back in Carlisle with little to show for his efforts.

Though neither side could claim any substantive edge in the military stakes, the Scots were enjoying some success on the diplomatic front. Their pleas to the Curia resulted, on 27th June 1299, in an admonition delivered by Boniface VIII – '*Scimus Fili*' ('We know my son'). This rejection of Edward's claim flew in the face of an earlier recognition, though, due to the envoy's persuasive entreaties, it

made reference to the guarantees provided within the Treaty of Birgham–Northampton. The unwilling messenger was Archbishop Winchelsea who knew the weight of the king's wrath all too well, threatened with suspension from his see if he prevaricated. Having finally tracked Edward to the northern frontier the archbishop was kept waiting and faced the inevitable explosion when the king comprehended the full measure of papal disfavour.

Longshanks was never either more wily or more resolute than when facing a crisis. Age had robbed him of neither grit nor guile. The marches were a long way from Rome and matters might be favourably resolved before the intervention could bite. In the autumn of 1300, however, the Patriots' political and military situation was far from promising. The Scots had lost a major bastion and their army had been seen off with only the whisper of a fight. Equally, Edward's expensive campaign had entirely failed to cow the patriots, who were honing their skills as guerrilla fighters, learning to exploit English weaknesses without exposing their own. A further round of talks was held at Dumfries, but again these failed to reach any consensus. Philip IV had proposed a truce, to last until 21 May the following year; the king was glad to agree. Putting the lull to good use, Edward concentrated on mending his fences with the disaffected magnates. Although he procrastinated endlessly, the king was eventually forced to give way and reaffirm both Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest.[48] The swell of opposition had been growing more vociferous and Longshanks was an old hand at recognizing the moment for compromise, however insincere his utterances might subsequently prove.

As an immediate riposte to '*Scimus Fili*', an embassy was dispatched to the Curia in November, led by the Earl of Lincoln and Hugh Despenser. The advertised purpose was to caretake the Anglo-French dispute but the matter of Scotland had been thoroughly researched and a detailed rebuttal of the patriot case prepared. This defence was approved by the Lincoln Parliament. Let the advocates haggle in the corridors of the Vatican; Edward was resolved on a fresh campaign in 1301. Summonses were issued in late winter for a muster on 24 June. The assault would involve two columns, one from Berwick under the direct command of the king, the other from Carlisle under the nominal leadership of Caernarvon, guided by the

experienced Lincoln.

As in the previous season, recruitment of adequate numbers of foot proved problematic. Some 7,500 appeared at Berwick, rather more in the west from whence the main offensive was to be mounted, while from across the water the Justiciar, John Wogan, mustered an Irish brigade. The king's brigade marched westward from Berwick along the banks of the Tweed in mid-July, crossing at Coldstream before moving via Traquair to Peebles, whilst the prince advanced on Glasgow, probably through Nithsdale.[50] Caernarvon was on Clydeside by 23 August and the following month laid siege to Bothwell Castle. As ever the English were able to demonstrate first-rate engineering skills: a movable siege tower or belfry was erected *in situ*, the various sections having been disassembled and transported on carts. By 24 September the castle had fallen, followed soon after by Turnberry.

The king went into winter quarters at Linlithgow where he was joined by his son once the bulk of the army had retired to the border. Edward's great scheme for the winter was the construction of a bridge over the Forth, the 'Scottish Sea'.[51] But the attempt foundered through lack of funds. Had the project gone ahead, 'we would have achieved such a success against our enemies, that our business in these parts would have been brought to a satisfactory and honourable conclusion'.[52] Not only did the engineering vision evaporate for lack of funds but troops were again deserting in droves – the prospect of a winter campaign in Scotland failed to enthuse and the lateness of the season may also have prevented Edward from seeking to recover Stirling.

Any plans for a renewed offensive in the spring had to be postponed due to the difficulties the English ambassadors were encountering at the Curia. Thomas Delisle and Thomas Wale had found His Holiness polite, outwardly accommodating, but totally non-committal. Edward was by no means the only master of prevarication. In the meantime, their Scottish counterpart, Baldred Bisset, appeared to be doing rather better. He and his colleagues had submitted a counter-history of relations between the two kingdoms with an equally Homeric royal lineage beginning with a Princess of Egypt.[53]

Bisset was able to argue that the English were by no means in possession of the realm; John de Soules was now Guardian and whilst he avoided direct confrontation with the invader and won no battles,

neither did he suffer any defeat. With no progress being made in Rome, Edward was prepared to agree to a truce to endure from 21 January until November. Baliol had already, in the course of the previous summer, been released into the care of Philip IV and subsequently fades into genteel obscurity. The negotiations with the French, who were also instrumental in brokering the Anglo-Scottish truce of 1302, had begun at Canterbury early in the preceding year. A powerful team of English negotiators comprised the earls of Surrey and Warwick, Aymer de Valence, John of St John and Hugh de Vere.

Though the French might have won the concession over custody of John Baliol, they could not extract any recognition that he was still King of Scots – that thorny question remained open. The talks continued across the Channel at Asnieres, where the lead negotiator on the English side appears to have been Walter Langdon, Bishop of Coventry and Chester, a highly skilled diplomat who had held a series of important royal posts including those of Treasurer and Keeper of the Wardrobe. If the French held Baliol and the Pope was undecided, Edward still had the loyalty of the Bruces; their claim could always be dusted down and re-glossed. Although there was no campaign on the border in that year there was action in Flanders, where the chivalry of France was severely checked by Flemish spears at Courtrai.[54]

Faced with such a serious reverse on his own doorstep, Philip could not afford continued enmity with England. In these changed circumstances support for the Scots became a burdensome luxury and was cynically put aside. Pope Boniface was also losing interest in the whole tangled business so the patriots suddenly found themselves cast adrift.

The Scots were sensitive to the shift in the weather vane and in 1303 sent a powerful embassy to Philip to try to bolster their position. The Guardian, Bishop Lamberton of St Andrews, Bishop Crambeth of Dunkeld, Buchan and the Steward hastened to Paris. The king of France remained distracted by the consequences of the debacle at Courtrai, his own difficulties with the Curia and pro-English disturbances which had arisen in Bordeaux. The final draft of the treaty with Edward was sealed in Paris on 20 May 1303.

In terms of strict protocol Philip had not abandoned the Scots; he held a power of attorney from Baliol to act on his behalf and on behalf of his country as he thought fit. Five days after completion of the

alliance the Scots ambassadors wrote to their countrymen advising them of the situation. John Comyn was acting Guardian during de Soules' absence; it was very bad news indeed and the pragmatists in the patriot ranks began inevitably to think of coming to terms with Longshanks. Lamberton wrote privately to Wallace, no doubt to urge him to continue the struggle.

Whilst the truce of 1302 held, the English had been able to maintain garrisons, perhaps a thousand men all told, guarding the key bastions of Berwick, Roxburgh, Jedburgh, Edinburgh, Linlithgow, Dumfries and Lochmaben.[55] Still short of money, Edward could not hope to repeat his feats of castle-building. His programme of military architecture might have sealed the conquest of Wales but without adequate cash resources could not be replicated in Scotland. In the autumn of that year the patriots took the field led by John Comyn and Simon Fraser. Sallying out from Selkirk Forest they took the nearby tower and briefly encircled Linlithgow. Edward's lieutenant in Scotland, John de Segrave, had been ordered to lead a reconnaissance which, early in the year, was to advance as far north as Kirkintilloch.

To counter the patriots a force was mustered at Wark under the army paymaster Ralph Manton, marching in search of the Scots in three disparate columns. Comyn and Fraser seized the moment and the initiative fell upon the battalion led by Segrave at Roslyn. In the fight the commander, his brother and sixteen other knights were captured, including Manton. Ralph Neville brought up his men to relieve the survivors. An order was given to put the prisoners to the sword but in the event only Manton was slain, apparently after trying to bargain for his life, offering the army's pay chest as a ransom. Fraser was not moved and killed the paymaster, 'cutting off his hands and his head'.[56]

These alarums were not permitted to distract the king from his intentions. The campaign of 1303 needed fewer troops than in previous years, perhaps 7,500 foot in total, and a correspondingly low turnout of mounted men-at-arms. Edward realised that the Scots would be likely to decline battle and that a large field army would merely consume additional resources to no advantage. He did get his bridge across the Forth: not the grand affair he might have envisaged but a series of pontoons, designed and built at King's Lynn and floated up the east coast.[57] Safely over the Scottish Sea, the English laid siege

to and took Brechin Castle.[58]

Continuing his Fabian tactics the Guardian offered no serious resistance and Edward's advance proceeded unchallenged as far as the Moray Firth, setting the stamp of royal authority along the length of the northeast coast. In September the army turned south from Kinloss to Lochindorb and thence to Boat of Garten, following the banks of the Spey towards Kildrummy. By 5 November the king had established winter quarters in Dunfermline.

Whilst Edward was conducting his leisurely chevauchée north of the Forth, Aymer de Valence was active in the Lothians. Here the English power did not go unchallenged. Wallace had returned to Scotland and, along with Simon Fraser, was actively raiding the outposts with Segrave, Clifford and Latimer in fitful pursuit. More violence flared in the west when the formidable Red Earl, with a force of some 3,457 Irish kerns carried in 173 ships, mounted an amphibious attack on Bute aimed at securing Rothesay Castle, before striking at Clydeside and scrimmaging with patriot forces at Inverkip.[59]

It is hard to gauge the effect, if any, on patriot morale of Wallace's return. Emerging from his old stamping grounds in Selkirk Forest he was still potent, but command appears to have been shared with Fraser and John Comyn. Annandale and Liddesdale were targeted, as was the English west march, the former undoubtedly harried to chastise Bruce for his defection, though Fraser himself had only reverted to his patriot allegiance despite having taken part in the siege of Caerlaverock in 1300.

In January 1304 and still acting in concert, Segrave, Clifford and Latimer led a commanded party out of Dunfermline seeking to beat up patriot forces south of the Forth. The raid was planned meticulously and in total secrecy. At Happenrew the English encountered both Wallace and Fraser, inflicting a sharp reverse and, though both leaders escaped the carnage, their position was greatly weakened. The increasingly isolated position of these diehard patriots was further marginalised when, at Strathord near Perth, the majority of the magnates submitted to Edward. They had accepted that without French support and without a second front in Gascony the king was free to concentrate his resources wholly against Scotland. The result of this was inevitable: Scotland would be conquered; Edward had

already promised that the time was ripe, as he put it for ‘an end to the business’.[60]

Only John Comyn refused unconditional surrender. As acting Guardian he demanded that all who submitted should be spared life and lands, that the laws of Scotland should be preserved as they had stood in the reign of Alexander III and not be varied or set aside without the consent of the Community of the Realm, a brave attempt to preserve the ideal of an independent kingdom. Edward had at least learned that savagery would achieve nothing and, with victory in his grasp, he could afford a show of magnanimity.

Those who submitted escaped without forfeit; those who had been dispossessed had an opportunity to buy back the lands they had lost, the tariff fixed by a sliding scale according to the perceived gravity of the buyer’s intransigence. The Steward, Ingram Umfraville and de Soules were excluded from the general amnesty. They were not to be included in the general amnesty until William Wallace, that persistent thorn, was finally dealt with. Thus the problem of this most constant patriot became a problem for the nobility of Scotland. De Soules, not deigning to submit, preferred exile in France. The guarantees Comyn required were not forthcoming, although the king did advise he would give consideration to constitutional matters once Comyn had made his submission.

Edward had won – only the mopping up remained. True, Wallace and Fraser remained at large and the defenders of Stirling under William Oliphant still held out, but the king’s authority was otherwise unchallenged. Leaving his winter quarters at Dunfermline, Longshanks summoned a Parliament at St Andrews which promptly outlawed these remaining patriots. Wallace was an outcast in his own country. The victor of Stirling Bridge, who with Andrew Murray had effectively re-invented the patriot cause, was not only abandoned but was to be hunted by his countrymen. Such were the bitter dregs of defeat.

The king could not claim to control Scotland fully whilst the garrison of Stirling Castle continued in defiance. The siege began in April. Oliphant’s position was a delicate one – the Scots Parliament had disowned him but, in the course of parlay, he observed that his command had been conferred directly by de Soules and thus only the absent Guardian could order a capitulation. This was a neat argument and not without merit – as de Soules was in exile no early reply could

be expected and the leaguer commenced in earnest.

Edward's master artillerist, Reginald the Engineer, had pulled together an impressive siege train with engines brought in sections, two from Brechin and one from Aberdeen. Caernarvon was commanded to oversee the stripping of church roofs at Perth and Dunblane to provide sufficient lead for the counterweights needed to balance the massive trebuchets. A major logistical exercise was undertaken to tighten the net on Stirling's defenders; as well as carpenters, joiners and skilled labourers, arms, armour, crossbows and the components of Greek fire (sulphur and saltpetre) were supplied from across the counties of England.[61]

Great engines such as 'Segrave', 'Forster' and 'Robinet' rained a constant barrage of missiles down upon the defenders. Open spaces within the enceinte became killing grounds as crashing boulders spat a blizzard of lethal shards. The defenders survived by crowding into caves and cellars burrowed into the living rock on which the fortress stands. Edward was very much in his element, revelling in the fury of the siege, disdaining fire from the walls even when a bolt struck his saddle.

More successful was the manufacture of the massive trebuchet, 'Warwolf'. This great engine required a team of five master carpenters and fifty journeymen to assist. The building process was so laborious that the device was not ready to shoot until 20 July, by which time the garrison were already suing for terms. Not to be denied the spectacle of his creation in action Edward refused to allow a formal surrender until Warwolf had fulfilled its function. No terms were offered and Oliphant and his men must have feared the worst, but despite dramatic posturing, the king allowed himself to be persuaded towards leniency and their lives were spared. By the high summer of 1304 Edward had returned south to England, the 'business', as he had predicted, having been concluded.

Almost concluded – William Wallace was a brutal and vengeful man in an age of total war and all its attendant horrors. Alone of all the Scots patriot leaders he had never compromised. More resolute than Fraser, Comyn and certainly Bruce, he would remain defiant to the last. That end came in August 1305 when he was finally captured by John of Menteith near Glasgow. He was taken to London and tried at Westminster Hall on the twenty-third day of that month. 'Trial' is

perhaps something of a misnomer for the accused was permitted neither voice nor representation. As an outlaw he could not expect the benefit of due process. The verdict was never in doubt and he suffered the full rigours of the sentence.[62]

In September 1305 the English Parliament debated the constitutional position of Scotland, nine or ten peers meeting with a score of the king's councillors. John of Brittany was appointed as lieutenant of the 'land' The use of the term 'realm' was carefully avoided and a series of administrative appointments were made. Most of the key bastions remained under English castellans; only Stirling and Dumbarton were given local commanders. There was to be a thorough overhaul of the Scottish legal system, with many of the more ancient and anachronistic processes deleted – in fairness to Edward this was probably overdue.

Edward's proposals for the governance of Scotland were neither harsh nor arbitrary – there was consultation, even if the matter of sovereignty was closed to debate. Edward had learnt that a gentler hand was needed, the arrogance of the earlier settlement of 1296–7 was avoided. As one modern biographer has observed: 'It was no small achievement for this elderly, conventional, conservative, unimaginative man that he had learnt anything at all'.[63]

In the end, the Edwardian conquest failed, but not while Longshanks lived – it was his uninterested, self-obsessed son who was to fail. Whilst the old king remained active he seemed invincible in the field. Indeed, he appeared to hold the magnates of Scotland in thrall; they seemed incapable of resisting him for any length of time:

> Edward I failed in his Scottish Wars. The task of conquering Scotland was an immense one, and failure is perhaps less surprising than the degree of success which the king achieved. His armies proved invincible in large scale battles, as Falkirk showed, and his engineers had an impressive record in siege warfare.[64]

That the durability of the conquest should prove so fragile derives from a number of factors. Edward had circled Wales with a ring of great concentric castles, Rhuddlan, Harlech, Conwy, Caernarfon and Beaumaris, even if the latter remained in its incomplete state due to a

lack of funding. There was no more money to achieve a similar effect in Scotland so the king was obliged to rely on maintaining existing castles, supported by rather ad hoc outposts, invariably thrown up in timber and earth.

By the end of 1305 it must have appeared to English and Scots alike that the business was indeed now at an end, with Scotland's future as a province of the Plantagenet empire confirmed. That the settlement, not even a year old, should be destroyed by the chain of events unleashed by a brutal murder in the hallowed precincts of Blackfriar's Kirk in Dumfries would have seemed inconceivable. Scotland's greatest paladin was about to take the stage.

Chapter 4
Robert Bruce

It was indeed a mighty undertaking that the king began, taking unbearable burdens upon his shoulders, for not only did he raise his hand against the mighty king of England and all his confederates and flatterers, but also devoted himself to a struggle against one and all in the kingdom of Scotland … like a drop of water reckoned against the waves of the sea.

– Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*[1]

Yet something fixed outlined the impulse.
His very health was dressed to kill.
He had an acrobat's love of self
Balancing body was his skill
Against the uniform space of death.

– Thom Gunn, *The Corporal*

Murder and sacrilege

The rebellion of Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, which was to change the entire direction of the war with England and ultimately lead to the triumph of the patriot cause, a success so telling that the flame of nationhood could never thenceforth be extinguished, began with an act of murder. Worse, the killing was compounded with sacrilege as the victim's blood was spilt on consecrated ground. Quite why Bruce, on 10 February 1306, decided to stab to death John Comyn of Badenoch, 'the Red Comyn', in the Greyfriars' church in Dumfries has never been fully explained.

It cannot be that the killing was premeditated for only a fool would choose to slaughter his victim in church. There had always been bad blood between the two and this had erupted into violence before. It is possible that Bruce and Comyn had entered into a pact or band between them whereby Comyn would support Bruce as a candidate for the throne in return for the broad acres of his earldom, whereupon Comyn had promptly confessed the scheme to Edward.

Bruce, when confronted with the damning evidence, could only temporize, requesting a night's respite to consider his position.

As he repaired to his lodgings, a page of the Earl of Gloucester's household brought him the gift of a shilling and a pair of spurs – a broad hint to be on his way as speedily as he might. Using the coin to reward the messenger, Bruce galloped north by forced stages to reach the temporary sanctuary of Lochmaben Castle. He arranged to meet Comyn in the Franciscan convent in the town, where the latter was accused of treachery. Harsh words and a blow struck in anger followed and the wounded man was bloodily dispatched by one of the earl's affinity.[2]

The affair is reported tersely in the English king's diatribe to Rome in condemnation of Bishop Lamberton of St Andrews:

> When Lamberton was made chief Guardian, Bruce rose against king Edward as a traitor, and murdered Sir John Comyn, lord of Badenoch, in the church of the Friars Minor of the town of Dumfries, by the high altar, because Sir John would not assent to the treason which Robert planned to perpetrate against the king of England, namely, to resume war against him and make himself King of Scotland.[3]

Comyn's violent demise was not a beacon to rekindle the patriot cause; on the contrary it ensured a vendetta with his surviving kin. It need not detract from the achievement of Robert Bruce that his rebellion was sparked by a need for self-preservation rather than a loftier ideal of freedom from the English yoke. The move was daring to the point of foolhardiness. Bruce had received few tokens from Edward since his defection from the patriots four years earlier and he may have chafed at this. It is uncertain when his wife Isabel, a daughter of the Earl of Mar, had died but he had, in 1302, married his second consort, Elizabeth de Burgh, child of the Red Earl of Ulster, an advantageous match, though as yet without issue. At twenty-eight Bruce may have felt the time was ripe for him to raise his standard. Edward was nearly forty years his senior and would be unlikely to live for much longer.

A blood feud with the powerful Comyns was not an enticing prospect, Bruce would have ample cause to regret the circumstances if

not the act of his enemy's taking off. So damaging was the fact of the murder that he sought a pardon from the king, but Edward's days of indulgence toward Robert Bruce were over, he was on his own, rebellion the only course left open. In June 1304 Robert had entered into an agreement with Bishop Lamberton which may have been intended to keep the spirit of the patriot cause alive. The English supremacy was the triumph of Edward I, his relentless aggression and towering charisma had kept the Scottish lords in thrall. Bruce had obviously met Caernarvon and would have swiftly discerned that the son was altogether less formidable than the father.

King Hobbe

At the outset Bruce's insurrection caught the English unawares. He moved to ensure control of certain key bastions in the west: Caerlavenock, Dumfries, Ayr and Dunaverty, Dalswinton and Tibbers soon fell to him. By the end of March, supported by the Bishop Wishart of Glasgow, Bruce was making plans for his coronation. The most threadbare of ceremonies (much of the royal regalia and, of course, the Stone of Destiny, had been pilfered) was mounted at Scone on 25 March, the feast of the Annunciation. At the high mass, held two days later on Palm Sunday, the hereditary office of the heir to the kingdom of Fife had to be performed by Isabel of Buchan. The new queen was something less than fully supportive, rather deriding her husband's regal pretensions: 'King of Summer' as she cruelly christened him.[4] The English sneered at 'King Hobbe':

> Now King Hobbe to the moors has gone,
> To come to town he has no desire.[5]

The new king would indeed require all the support he could muster. Reaction in the realm to his elevation, and the spectre of English retaliation which it invoked, was lukewarm. There could be no immediate prospect of a rapprochement with the Comyns and their MacDougall allies despite the fact that Wishart had granted absolution for the murder of John of Badenoch. The bishop had already encouraged his protégé, James Douglas, to seek out the new king and proffer his sword. And a mighty blade this would be, despite the fact the Bruce, whilst in Edward's service, had harried Douglasdale; the young knight was keen to strike a blow at Clifford who was currently

enjoying his family lands.[6]

With the west at least partially secure and the doorway to Ireland open, Bruce did not find himself without supporters. The earls of Athol, Menteith and Lennox attended the coronation and others such as Thomas Randolph, Gilbert Hay, Reginald Crawford, Robert Boyd, Neil Campbell and now the formidable Douglas, rallied to the colours. From Selkirk Forest, Simon Fraser sallied out to harass the English garrisons. The court progressed through the counties of the northeast, not on a leisurely tour but a whirlwind advance. The king used flattery, cajolery and, when these failed, threats and intimidation to coerce the magnates and secure the vital supply line through the east coast ports. Robert's grip on power was, at best, tenuous. Comyn and MacDougall alike were baying for vengeance and others such as Patrick Dunbar and Malise of Strathearn found the odds too great to risk reverting to the patriot cause.

Retribution was not long delayed. In February, Clifford and Percy took Tibbers and by the beginning of March had secured Dumfries.[7] On 5 April, Aylmer de Valence, later to be Earl of Pembroke, was appointed to command in the east and began to build up his forces. By the middle of July he could deploy some 300 horse with a detachment of hobilers from the west march supported by 1,300 foot.[8] A fuller muster was arranged for Carlisle with Edward of Caernarvon in charge. King Edward was slowly, and by now very painfully, making his way north, his physical condition deteriorating. The prince did not leave the west march until July but, by then, de Valence had routed the patriots in a bold attack at Methven, near Perth. The Scots were caught totally unprepared on the evening of 19 June. So total was the defeat that the Scottish knights reversed their blazons to conceal their identities, there was no vestige of honour for a traitor.[9] King Robert, surprised and routed, fell back towards the west but suffered further reverses by Loch Tay and at Dail Righ (Dalry), near Tyndrum, where he was assailed by the men of Lorn led by MacDougall.

For the fugitive king of Scots, the hunt was now on, his slender forces scattered and demoralised. By the end of August his castle on Loch Doon had fallen and, far worse, the redoubtable Simon Fraser had been captured near Stirling. Bruce may have rested in the temporary haven of Dunaverty but, by September, this too was under siege. John Botecourt and John of Menteith brought engines from

Carlisle by sea and battered their way past the crumbling walls, but Robert was already gone.

Worse was soon to follow. Having taken the surrender of Lochmaben, Caernarvon advanced as far as Perth, and as the summer waned in September, he reached Kildrummy, held by Robert's brother, Neil. The Queen and the Princess Marjorie (Bruce's daughter by his first marriage) were within. Though they sought to flee to sanctuary at Tain, both were captured by the Earl of Ross and delivered to Edward. Neil Bruce, following his surrender, endured a traitor's death at Berwick. The Earl of Atholl, Herbert de Morham, Thomas du Boys and Simon Fraser suffered a similar, dreadful fate in London, while Christopher Seton died at Dumfries.

Although Queen Elizabeth, as a daughter of the Red Earl, and Marjorie, on account of her tender years, were spared ill treatment, Robert's sister Mary, the Countess of Buchan, was forced to live, exposed to the mob and the elements, in a specially-constructed timber cage suspended from the walls of Roxburgh and Berwick. The ageing English king, aware of the inexorable advance of mortality, was savage in his haste to crush this pernicious germ of patriotism. After the fall of Kildrummy, Caernarvon's knights grew restive in the uncongenial Scottish autumn, so twenty-two of them simply upped and left to tourney in France or seek other, more lively diversions. Such gross dereliction, all the more heinous because it went unpunished by the hedonistic prince, drew forth a mighty groan of royal wrath and dire consequences were promised for the offenders, although Edward allowed himself to be converted to leniency.

By the turn of the year it was rumoured that Robert Bruce had sought refuge in Ireland, though he might expect short shrift from his father-in-law; more likely he was hiding on Islay.[10] Angus Og MacDonald was sympathetic; no friend of the MacDougalls, he had fighting men and fast-oared Hebridean galleys, so more men could be hired in from Ireland. Nonetheless the season began badly, with Thomas and Alexander Bruce defeated and captured by Domnal MacDougall when they attempted a seaborne raid on Galloway, having landed from eighteen ships with Sir Reginald Crawford and Malcolm fitz Lengleys, the lord of Kintyre. The Galwegians spared few; just a handful escaped. Fitz Lengleys was immediately put to death, Thomas was taken to Carlisle, drawn through the streets and then

killed. Alexander Bruce and Crawford were hanged and then beheaded, the severed heads sent post haste to Caernarvon.[11] Only one of Bruce's siblings, Edward, now survived.

In those early months of 1307 Robert Bruce lived a precarious existence, the partisan, hunted by his enemies, liable to be betrayed by those he might call friends. It is often assumed that support for the king began to snowball at this time, from a thin trickle to a swelling torrent, but this is probably flawed, Bruce was on the run. The MacDougall, John of Argyll, was relentless, using tracker dogs to beat the bracken, as though in pursuit of game. This was, nonetheless, a dangerous prey and for the patriots there were some successes. They came off best in a skirmish in Glentrool in April, even if the planned ambush failed in its prime objective. At Loudon Hill, on the tenth of the following month, Bruce bested de Valence, who was seen off with some, albeit minor, loss.

Edward I, failing in body if not in spirit, swiftly grew restive at the lack of decisive action. He was acutely aware he did not have time enough for a protracted guerrilla campaign. At the start of the year the sheriff of Cumbria had been instructed to gather a fleet for service on the west coast whilst the king summoned the last physical reserves, dredged up by an iron will, determined to lead a summer offensive in person. But Longshanks had harried the Scots for the last time, dying at Burgh by Sands on 7 July.

With its guiding genius dead the English presence in Scotland faltered. The patriots were still few in number, short of arms and cash, but the initiative now passed to Bruce, who had learnt the rugged lessons of successful guerrilla warfare, who knew how to use the hostile terrain of Galloway and the wild uplands of Selkirk Forest to his advantage. Even before Edward I was dead the mood amongst English commanders, perhaps particularly at the local level, was becoming increasingly pessimistic. Correspondence survives from May 1307, most probably written by the English castellan at Forfar, which appears to sum up the prevailing gloom:

> I hear that Bruce never had the goodwill of his followers or of the people generally so much with him as now. It appears that God is with him, for he has destroyed King Edward's power both among English and Scots. The people believe Bruce will

> carry all before him, exhorted by false preachers from Bruce's army … May it please God to prolong king Edward's life, for men say openly that when he is gone the victory will go to Bruce. For those preachers have told the people that they have found a prophecy of Merlin, that after the death of 'le Roy Coveytous' the people of Scotland and the Welsh shall band together to the end of the world.[12]

As his forces grew in numbers and his reputation swelled, King Robert developed means of waging war that maximised his strengths; castles, when taken, were often not garrisoned but slighted, denying their use to the foe and avoiding the need for static garrisons. Frightfulness, the deliberate use of terror, was not scorned. Intimidation and blackmail went with the ruthless harrying of enemy lands, economic and social destruction, forcing the northern counties of England to repeatedly buy off the Scots. Filling the war chest by extortion, pitched battles were avoided, Fabian tactics prevailed; the rugged terrain of the west provided ample refuge.

With his father at last gone, Caernarvon, now Edward II, had pressing concerns other than Scotland. Besides, the war was Longshanks' obsession, not his. With the old king dead, the mainspring of the English effort was removed. In July, the new king followed the body of the old as far as York before returning to Carlisle to resume the summer campaign. Edward now led an expedition, marching in three columns, into the western marches. Bruce was temporarily contained in Carrick and Galloway, whilst the English proceeded to Dumfries where the king received the homage of those magnates who remained loyal. The advance continued through Nithsdale as far as Cumnock and Edward kept the field until late August, after which he retired to Carlisle. To all intents and purposes this was to be his last major effort for the next three years, during which the initiative lay wholly with Bruce and his supporters.

At the end of August de Valence was appointed as the king's lieutenant but was speedily replaced by Edward's cousin, John of Brittany. This has been viewed as a political shift, inspired by the counsels of the young king's boon companion, Piers Gaveston. Edward's relationship with the Gascon knight had raised eyebrows during his father's lifetime but, free of the austere straitjacket of

parental control, the king lavished honours and affection on his favourite. Whether the relationship between the two men was explicitly sexual is unclear but most contemporaries seem to have felt that it was and, as such, grossly repugnant. Additional appointments of march officials or 'conservators' were also made for the counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland. These measures were entirely defensive in nature. No new expeditions were planned, the garrisons in Scotland were left exposed, as indeed were the king's Scottish allies. Unfettered by English aggression Bruce could assume the offensive.

Winning the realm

In the autumn of 1307 the patriots broke out of the southwest, supported by the MacDonalds and MacRuairidhs. They advanced by way of the Great Glen to confront King Robert's enemies the Comyns. Catching his foes before they could muster against him, Bruce compelled their submission. His methods were by no means gentle and when Buchan fought back during the winter his lands were thoroughly ravaged, the 'herschip of Buchan'. The Earl of Ross spelt out the grim reality of his and Buchan's position in a letter to King Edward which was probably written in the last weeks of 1307:

> Be it known that we heard of the coming of Robert Bruce towards the parts of Ross with a great power, so that we had no power against him, but nevertheless we caused our men to be called out and we were stationed for a fortnight with 3,000 men, at our own expense, on the borders of our earldom, and in two other earldoms, Sutherland and Caithness; and he would have destroyed them utterly if we had not made a truce with him, at the entreaty of good men, both clergy and others, until Whitsun next.[13]

The few English garrisons were too scattered to offer much support and the Comyn was decisively defeated by King Robert at Inverurie in May 1308, even though the Bruce, dangerously ill over the winter, could barely stay upright in the saddle. In the west, Bruce's MacDonalds bottled up John of Argyll, sick and despondent, in Dunstaffnage. By March he was writing despairingly to Edward, partly to show how desperate the odds had become and partly to explain

why it had been expedient to agree to a truce:

> I was confined to my bed with illness, and have been for six months past, Bruce approached these parts by land and sea with 10,000 men they say, or 15,000. I have no more than 800 men, 500 in my own pay whom I keep continually to guard the borders of my territory. The barons of Argyll give me no aid. Yet Bruce asked for a truce which I granted him for a short space.[14]

Douglas too had been active over the winter, recovering his castle from Clifford's garrison, the celebrated mayhem of the 'Douglas Larder'.[15] This satisfying slaughter was followed by a thorough 'herschip' of Galloway in the company of Edward Bruce, Alexander Lindsay and Robert Boyd, causing many to flee in panic into the English west march. A skirmish was fought late in June 1308 in which the rebels were again victorious. By August, high summer in the highlands, King Robert was ready to settle with the MacDougalls, who, like all his native foes, were without recourse to English support and forced onto the defensive. Still not fully recovered, John of Argyll directed operations from a galley anchored on Loch Awe.[16]

His kerns sought to contest the Pass of Brander, massing on the steep slopes of Ben Cruachan, from where they launched a storm of boulders onto the patriots toiling through the narrow confines. Douglas, however, swift footed and ever valiant, led a commando against the defenders, scrambling up the heather-clad slopes and putting the MacDougalls to flight. By autumn Dunstaffnage had fallen, John of Argyll was in full retreat south and his father, Alexander, who surrendered with the garrison, bowed to the inevitable and offered his homage to Bruce.

By the latter part of 1308 the fortunes of the patriot cause were utterly transformed: the hunted had now become the hunters. From a few precarious toeholds Bruce had extended his sway over the western highlands, the Comyn lands in the northeast, Argyll and Galloway. Robert I was now king for all seasons. The main English garrisons still remained as it was mainly the lesser, timbered fortifications that had fallen, but these increasingly isolated outposts were perennially under strength and under supplied, neglected by an indifferent throne

wrapped up in domestic difficulties.

Edward II is one of England's least-regarded medieval monarchs. Professor Prestwich finds he

> was one of the most unsuccessful kings ever to rule England. The domestic history of the reign is one of successive political failures punctuated by acts of horrific violence … Personal hatreds and jealousies were more important than constitutional principles, as was demonstrated in the final overthrow of the incompetent king by his queen, Isabella.[17]

As prince he had formed his close relationship with Piers Gaveston which, regardless of any sexual connotations, was heartily disapproved of by his father, who had ordered the Gascon abroad. Isabella was a daughter of Philip IV of France, a woman of beauty, spirit and considerable courage, if also haughty, avaricious and ruthless. She was not of a temperament to be openly passed over in favour of the king's masculine intimates.[18]

The king undoubtedly reacted, at least in part, to the austerity of his father's reign. He was hedonistic, indolent, bored by matters of state and much given to rustic pleasures such as ditching and thatching, 'lazy and incompetent'.[19] Physically he was tall and well proportioned, graceful in speech and manner, an accomplished horseman, but lacking in the single mindedness necessary to make a soldier. Edward's marriage to Queen Isabella was solemnised in Boulogne in January 1308 but by then Gaveston was already returned and installed as Earl of Cornwall whilst rumblings of discontent, though still muted, were already beginning to sound. A group of senior magnates, all men of proven loyalty in the days of Edward I, entered into a band of agreement pledging themselves to strive for the reform of 'things which have been done before this time contrary to his [the king's] honour and the rights of his crown, and the oppressions which have been done and are still being done to his people'.[20]

A rising clamour to be rid of Gaveston began to swell mightily and the king, his position weakened by the parlous state of the exchequer, was finally, in 1311, obliged to concede the appointment of a supervisory council of twenty-one 'Ordinancers' to co-ordinate

necessary reforms. Throughout all this the English position in Scotland continued to decline; defeating and subjugating the Scots had been Edward I's obsession; his son was, at best, uninterested and became increasingly preoccupied with the baronial opposition.

In June 1308 he had gone through the motions of launching a campaign, issuing writs of military service and ordering a muster at Carlisle for 22 August, though he easily allowed political developments in England to take precedence and the proposed army never materialised. Left to hold the line in Scotland south of the Forth were Robert Umfraville, Lord of Redesdale and Earl of Angus, Henry Beaumont and William Ros, with a troop of forty men-at-arms apiece. North of the river Alexander Abernethy, Edmund Hastings and John Fitzmarmaduke jointly held office with a force of one hundred and twenty men. In the southwest, Buchan, John Mowbray and Ingram Umfraville held sway, again with forty men-at-arms for each.

Clifford had replaced John of Brittany as Lieutenant, his office alternating with John Segrave, and he had his own retinue comprising a hundred men-at-arms, sixty from his own affinity and a further forty knights drawn from the Household. By the end of 1308 negotiations for a truce, at the prompting of France, were under way. In January 1309, Gloucester, with the mediation of two papal envoys, agreed a ceasefire to hold until the next All Saints (1 November). The agreement provided that both sides should withdraw to the lines they had held on the Feast of James the Apostle (25 July) in 1307. Needless to say King Robert had not the slightest intention of abandoning the extensive and hard-won gains he had amassed and the truce was, to all intents and purposes, an admission by Edward that he was in no position to resume the offensive.

Throughout 1309 the English remained largely on the defensive. Gloucester, who had succeeded Clifford, relieved a siege of Rutherglen castle, only to see the place fall to Edward Bruce later in the year. In July, the Stamford Parliament resolved to renew a campaign that had been proposed for June then cancelled. A muster subsequently ordered for 29 September was deferred until October, before being finally abandoned altogether.

Bruce had already held his first major Parliament, at St Andrews in March. His father-in-law, the Red Earl of Ulster, who had remained unshakeable in his allegiance to Edward, did mount an offensive, of

the purely diplomatic sort, from Ireland, intended to try to relieve the pressure on John of Argyll. The mission produced no tangible results but Ireland remained a major source of supply for the remaining English garrisons of the southwest.[2]

In November, Edward's commissioners entered into negotiations for a proposed extension of the existing truce. At the end of the month Segrave was dispatched to Berwick, Clifford with the Earl of Hereford and John Cromwell posted to Carlisle, their brief to seek an extended truce until 14 January 1310. For his part Clifford was anxious to stretch this still further, till March at least or even into the early summer. Bowing to expediency, the king had empowered the castellans of the most exposed garrisons, excluding only those in the southwest, to agree local arrangements into early June, till Whitsun (which fell on 7 June).

Discerning the way the wind was now blowing, numbers of senior magnates hastened to submit, including Ross, the Steward and, significantly, the powerful Earl of Lennox, who brought the key bastion of Dumbarton as a potent token of his revised allegiance. Since his capture in the shambles at Methven, Thomas Randolph had served England; taken now by the Scots he voiced a deep abhorrence of the unchivalric nature of guerrilla-style warfare. Bruce won him over, however. Created Earl of Moray in 1312, Randolph was to become one of the great captains of the age and a stalwart of the patriot cause.

In his dealings and ordinances Bruce referred to Alexander III as his predecessor, Baliol's kingship being effectively overreached. The Scots Parliament was more than willing to expunge the luckless King John. Bruce was able to demonstrate the qualities required to match the four 'pillars' of inheritance: succession, inheritance, virtue, election and conquest. The Scottish Church provided a 'Declaration of the Clergy' in forceful terms which stressed Bruce's role as deliverer.[22]

Philip IV of France, Edward's father-in-law, publicly referred to Robert as Earl of Carrick, whilst in private correspondence addressing him as King of Scots.[23] The campaign which Edward II now planned for the summer of 1310 was largely a device intended to frustrate the growing ranks of the opposition and to snatch the reins of government from the grasping hands of reformers. Philip was also pressing his reluctant son-in-law to perform full feudal homage, a humiliation the king was anxious to avoid.

With the exchequer now removed to York, Edward and Gaveston might feel less threatened and, if the king had any doubt as to the seriousness of his affairs in Scotland, he received a sharp reminder in the form of a brutally frank letter written by four of his Scottish lords, Alexander Abernethy, Ingram Umfraville, Alexander and John of Argyll, addressed to Aymer de Valence, now, since 1308, Earl of Pembroke: 'We should lose both the land and those who still remain faithful to us by reason of our default and our laxity'.[24]

Edward's negligence was affecting northern England. Patriot success inevitably meant the northern counties were exposed. As far back as September 1307 'keepers of the peace' had been appointed to the English west march; in that November Gilbert Umfraville and William de Ros were given a similar role in Northumberland.[25] The ruthlessness of the patriot campaigns in Scotland had, by 1310, already swelled the marches with a desperate host of refugees. Dispossessed Gallowegians crowded their beasts into Inglewood Forest. Locals probably divined that worse was to come and in this they would have been entirely correct.

There was scant enthusiasm in England for a Scottish campaign. Magnates such as Pembroke, Hereford, Arundel and Thomas of Lancaster, ignored the summons.[26] Only Gloucester and Warenne were prepared to join the royal catamite for a muster at Tweedmouth. Bartholomew Badlesmere was appointed Constable with Nicholas Segrave as Marshall; Lincoln was to act as regent.

King Edward commanded a host comprising some 300 men-at-arms, fifty knights of the Household and perhaps 3,000 foot, Welshmen in the main with a company of elite crossbowmen raised and equipped by the City of London and intended for service in the Berwick garrison. The outposts on the Tweed and through the Merse were stripped to provide additional manpower. The delinquent earls had sent their basic feudal quota and the plan was for a combined assault, Edward in the east and the Red Earl from the west, leading a force out of Ireland to Ayr where they would act in concert with John of Argyll. De Burgh was to provide a force of 500 men-at-arms, 300 hobilers and 2,000 foot.

Ships were ordered up from both the Irish ports and the west of England, but on 2 August the Irish arm of the offensive was aborted. The declared reason for this cancellation was the difficulties caused by

a poor harvest, but this is less likely than the fact that the MacSweens, clients of Edward, had been driven out of Knapdale by Menteith. In July, the king had granted the area to John MacSween, though his enjoyment was subject to him being able to expel Menteith. This feud over the local lordship was nothing new and had been festering for the best part of half a century. Patriot success in the west may have inspired fears of a possible attack on the Isle of Man and the Red Earl's knights were deployed to bolster Simon Montacute's garrison there.[27]

On 1 September the royal army forded the Tweed at Wark and carried out an initial sweep through Selkirk Forest. Meeting no opposition, the king turned west on 21 September to advance along the Clyde Valley as far as Renfrew. From here the army returned eastward, reaching Linlithgow by 23 October. A week or so later King Edward was back in Berwick. The expedition, though it had failed to bring on a general engagement, had secured the vital garrisons south of the Forth and demonstrated that the English still had teeth. The king remained on the borders until June 1311, a convenient distance from his critics, whilst Gaveston was safely installed at Roxburgh, Warenne held Wark and Gloucester the Prince Bishop's castle at Norham.

Throughout the campaign of 1310 Bruce was too canny to accept the hazard of battle. He relied, as ever, on the guerrilla-style tactics which had served him so well to date, denying sustenance to the invader, hanging on his flanks and cutting up isolated detachments. Thus the campaign was by no means bloodless:

> One day, when some English and Welsh, always ready for plunder, had gone out on a raid, accompanied for protection by many horsemen from the army, Bruce's men, who had been concealed in caves and in the woodlands, made a serious attack on our men. Our horsemen, seeing that they could not help the infantry, returned to the main force with a frightening uproar; and immediately leapt to arms and hastened with one accord to the help of those who had been left amongst the enemy; but assistance came too late to prevent the slaughter of our men … Before our knights arrived, up to 300 Welsh and English had been slaughtered, and the enemy returned to their caves. From such ambushers our men suffered heavy losses.[28]

No sooner had the English departed than Bruce launched a retaliatory strike into the Merse. Edward led out the Berwick garrison to see him off and the Scots again fell back without engaging. One of the problems which confronted the English in 1310 arose from King Robert's policy of slighting the captured forts. This increased the isolation of the remaining garrisons in the larger holds and made the reoccupation of territory impossible without rebuilding, which was both time consuming and expensive. Longshanks had been able to maintain forty or so outposts and by 1310 Bruce had perhaps recovered a quarter of these.[29]

Edward now sought to consolidate the position by entering into a series of contracts or indentures with his nobles, appointing Robert Umfraville as his lieutenant in the far north, based at Perth, where Beaumont commanded the immediate garrison and with Percy and Pain Tiptoft in support. Umfraville could count on a couple of hundred men-at-arms plus the retinues of sympathetic Scottish lords. Clifford was given the southern command based at Berwick, Roger Mortimer took over from Cornwall at Roxburgh, John Segrave became warden of Annandale and, whilst Dungal MacDougall still clung on at Dumfries and Ingram Umfraville held Caerlaverock, the west was effectively ceded to the patriots.

In the meantime, the regent Lincoln had died. His beneficiary Thomas of Lancaster[30] was to become the focus of baronial opposition, a man of limited ability, much taken with private feuds, lacking in charisma or serious political acumen, 'sulky, vindictive, self seeking and vicious'.[31] He was, nonetheless, by far the wealthiest of the barons, with vast estates in the north. The earl journeyed north to meet the king and do homage for his inheritance, but being very much of the reform party, he refused to cross the Tweed and, after some procrastination, the king met with the earl at Haggerston on the English side.

With the tide of opposition swelling alarmingly there is the suggestion that Edward was prepared to consider a permanent peace with Bruce in return, possibly, for military assistance against the dissenting magnates and a safe haven for Gaveston north of the border. The reformers or 'Ordainers' were echoing the demands first aired in the constitutional crisis of 1297, but the opposition was now more broadly based. The rebels comprised a number of those peers

who had opposed Edward I then but others, like Lincoln, had not been involved in the earlier crisis. The list of demands, not surprisingly, included the expulsion from the realm of Gaveston and a greater degree of control over the crown's finances.[32] The king's poor grasp of magnate politics and his abundant abuses of royal patronage had alienated many and thus deprived him of a solid affinity. The Ordainers' demands included not only the removal of Gaveston but a purge of the Household.

The year 1311 was to prove a difficult one. The king could not remain isolated in the north forever; he was without troops and had not the means to pay the hire of more. He feared calling Parliament as this would be to play into the hands of the Ordainers. Casting about for expedients he attempted to levy a local tax from the marcher communities and, on 20 May, tried to organise a general muster without Parliamentary sanction. His attempts to raise mounted contingents from the magnates were no more successful. A muster was planned for 5 July, a still-born thing: the king conceded beforehand that he had no choice but to square up to the opposition. Edward reluctantly summoned a Parliament then king and court rode south from Berwick at the end of July, leaving Gaveston at Bamburgh.

At Westminster the king was obliged to submit the governance of his affairs to what was, in effect, a regency council. His finances were restructured and the services of his current Italian bankers, the Frescobaldi, were superseded by the Genoese Antonio Pessagno. The odious Gaveston was sent into exile. Having learnt nothing from the wrack of his power the king procured his lover's return and by November Gaveston was restored to the realm. Facing new demands from the Ordainers for further expulsions from the Household, Edward, having kept Christmas at Westminster with his paramour, determined on defiance and fled north. Civil war now appeared inevitable.

From this point the situation began to deteriorate rather rapidly. The magnates were united in their opposition. Edward may have made further overtures to Bruce at this point but found his own officers on the border holding the line, not only against the Scots but also against him.[33] Having briefly rested at Newcastle the pair split up, with Gaveston sailing from the Tyne to the imagined safety of Scarborough Castle where he presently found himself besieged by

superior baronial forces. With no hope of relief, the Gascon surrendered on terms to Pembroke, one of the more moderate Ordainers.

Though the earl guaranteed the favourite's personal safety, matters were taken irrevocably out of his hands when the besiegers were themselves ambushed by the Earl of Warwick, frequently a victim of the royal catamite's waspish tongue.[34] Having learnt nothing, the Gascon now insisted on insulting his captors, who were most certainly not bound by any oaths regarding his continued wellbeing. Presently he was handed over to a tribunal comprising the earls of Lancaster, Arundel and Hereford. Judgement was swift and Gaveston's final journey was to Lancaster's property at Blacklaw Hill, where he was executed without further ceremony.

Meanwhile, the patriots in Scotland had not failed to take advantage of these alarums in England. They now held the vital port of Aberdeen which served as a flourishing base for privateers, preying on enemy vessels in the North Sea. There were stirrings within the fastnesses of the border wastelands. Gloucester and Warenne mounted a sweep through Selkirk Forest before the former returned to England to take on the regency, vacant since Lincoln's death.

By now King Robert had gathered a fleet of sleek Hebridean galleys. John of Argyll was impotent and imploring at Berwick. His plight possibly motivated Edward to launch a fresh expedition from Ireland in the early months of 1311, comprising some 300 men-at-arms, ten times as many foot and a screen of 500 hobilers[35], the English king was

> Greatly desirous that the fleet which he had ordered to set sail for Scotland and the coast of Argyll under the orders of his liege Sir John of Argyll should be ready as soon as possible, seeing [that] it is one of the greatest movements of the Scottish war[36]

This last, bold assertion proved somewhat optimistic; the response, in terms of ships, was less than encouraging. The expedition was inevitably scaled down but seems to have met with some success, including actions at sea.[37] Of infinitely greater import was the Scottish reaction when Edward finally quit Berwick. Bruce launched two

devastating *chevauchées* into northern England. Lanercost Chronicle states the relevant dates were 12–20 August and 8–23 September. In the first of these raids:

> Having collected a great army, he [Robert] entered England at Solway on the Thursday before the feast of the Assumption; and he burned all the land of the lord of Gilsland and the vils of Haltwhistle and a great part of Tynedale, and after eight days he returned to Scotland taking with him a great booty of animals; nevertheless he had killed few men apart from those who wished to defend themselves by resistance.[38]

In the following month the pattern was repeated:

> About the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, Robert returned with an army into England, directing his march towards Northumberland, and passing by Harbottle and Holystone and Redesdale, he burnt the district about Corbridge, destroying everything; he also caused more men to be killed than on the former occasion. And so he turned into the valleys of the North and South Tyne, laying waste those parts which he had previously spared, and returned into Scotland after fifteen days; nor could the wardens whom the king of England had stationed on the marches oppose so great a force of Scots as he brought with him.[39]

Despairing of any assistance from their king, now so thoroughly enmeshed in his squabble with the Ordainers, the Northumbrians bought local truces, to hold until Candlemas the following year (2 February). This handy blackmail was sufficient to fund a three-month siege of Dundee, which fell to the patriots in April 1312.

A mite more terror

Wasting Northern England was not merely blind revenge bent on destruction, it was a finely honed strategy of economic warfare. The intention was to attack the concept of ‘good lordship’ which went to the very core of the feudal pyramid. If the magnate and the knight beneath him could not defend their tenants then why was allegiance owed?

The raids either wasted or impoverished the northern counties, in part thereby weakening their capacity to support a renewal of the war and also funding the patriot cause, paying for men, engines of war and material. There was little that King Edward could offer in response, his own border officials having turned against him, his magnates wholly bent on hunting down his detested favourite. King Robert's war was a new type of conflict aimed at long-term damage to the economy of northern England rather than the winning of castles or battles in the field. His armies rode to war astride shaggy little garrons; these were not cavalry but mounted infantry, having the mobility of the former and the steadiness of the latter.

They travelled light these swift hobilers, no lumbering baggage trains struggling through the miry roads, no great straggle of camp followers and whores stumbling behind. The raids were of short duration but well coordinated and clearly targeted, each man carrying his supply of meal in his pack and a flat stone for cooking under the saddle. Such swift-moving forces could confound and overawe any local opposition and then outwit or outrun any conventional forces mustered against them. With northern magnates such as Clifford distracted by the hunt for Gaveston, Bruce struck again in that desperate summer of 1312:

> When Robert Bruce heard of this discord in the south, having assembled a great army, he invaded England about the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin [15 August] and burned the towns of Hexham and Corbridge and the western parts and took booty and much spoil and prisoners, nor was there anyone who dared to resist. While he halted in peace and safety near Corbridge he sent part of his army as far as Durham, which arriving there suddenly on market day, carried off all that was found in the town, and gave a great part of it to the flames, cruelly killing all who opposed them, but scarcely attacking the castle and priory.[40]

It is perhaps unsurprising that the Scottish chroniclers gave little thought to the sufferings of the English:

> The fruitless English nation which had unrighteously racked many a man, by God's righteous judgement, made to undergo

> awful scourges; and whereas it had once been victorious, now it sank vanquished and groaning.[41]

In the wake of Scottish raids, with order and community wracked, lawlessness swept into the vacuum, the genesis of the 'riding' culture that would reach its dire apogee in the sixteenth century. A pattern of life would gradually be created in the northern counties, particularly in the upland dales, where warfare, raiding and the blood feud or 'feid' became endemic. Even the buying of truces was no guarantee of peace; local incursions such as that which witnessed the razing of the settlement at Norham early in 1312 still sparked, in this instance, possibly as a retaliation against forays by the garrison.

In addition to the other benefits the continuance of the war in northern England left Bruce unhindered in his efforts to reduce the remaining garrisons still holding out on Scottish soil. Though these were much diminished, the English presence was still formidable. With Dundee now recovered, Perth was the single major bastion north of the Forth; south of the divide the castles of Edinburgh, Stirling and Bothwell secured the Forth-Clyde isthmus, strengthened by outposts or peles at Linlithgow and Livingston.[42]

The Tweed was strongly held from Berwick along to Norham then Wark with the outlying fortresses of Roxburgh and Jedburgh in Teviotdale. In the west, though the English grip had been prised free over large areas, they still held on to castles at Lochmaben, Dumfries, and Caerlaverock with peles at Tibbers, Dalswinton, Buittle and the chain of forts in the English west march behind: Carlisle, Bewcastle and Harbottle.

As the Scots were still lacking both the means and the experience to conduct full-scale sieges of major castles, they were thrown back upon their ingenuity allied to boldness and cunning. On 6th June 1312 an attempt was made, by stealth, upon the walls of Berwick. Rope ladders fitted with grappling hooks were heaved over the parapet by a brace of sappers wielding a long pole. Only the providential barking of one of the dogs, clearly more alert that its master, gave the game away and roused the garrison in time to beat off the escalade.

A further consideration was that the protracted siege of a major citadel might tempt even the supine Edward into intervening in force.

This was something Bruce wished to avoid at all costs. His campaign of attrition had been hugely successful, he had recovered vast swathes of ground, secured strongpoints and eliminated outposts without provoking an engagement in the field against superior forces which could so easily prove disastrous; the example of Wallace and Falkirk would still be fresh.

Nonetheless, by January 1313, the siege of Perth was under way. With a fine irony the English castellan was that same William Oliphant who had so valiantly held Stirling against Longshanks nine years earlier. Though Bruce had already been bolstered by the defection to the patriot cause of the Earl of Athol, Oliphant defended Perth as resolutely as he had Stirling. As the place was not likely to fall to a direct assault, Bruce resorted to a Homeric ruse worthy of the creators of the Trojan Horse. He caused his engines to be dismantled, his trenches and works levelled, and departed with all of his men, only to return a few nights later and, under cover of darkness, wade the moat and secure a section of parapet sufficient to allow the storming party to open the gates and admit the host.

He then moved on to Dumfries, held by Dungal MacDougall, the killer of two of his brothers. That notwithstanding, he permitted the garrison, in February 1313, to surrender on terms and depart. Both Caerlaverock and the pele at Buittle fell soon after. MacDougall withdrew into Rushen Castle on Man, soon to find himself once again besieged by the patriots. After five weeks this final bastion also capitulated and MacDougall was constrained to flee to Ireland. In the autumn the patriots seized Linlithgow.[43] The northern counties of England had sought to buy a further immunity from August 1312 to hold until the following midsummer. Spring still brought an invasion scare; in the east, the marchers were struggling to raise the requisite funds from their wasted lands. In April, a desperate plea to the king for military assistance met with the curt and less than helpful reply that the Northumbrians must shift for themselves. All that Bruce had to do was amass sufficient forces for an attack and the demoralised marchers paid up without a blow being struck. This time they scraped together enough to pay for the truce to be extended until Michaelmas (29 September) 1314.

Due in part to the brilliance of their tactics and the ruthless energy with which they were employed, and in part to the feebleness of

Edward II, the Scots had achieved a complete domination of the English marches, which lacked the means, the will and above all the leadership to respond effectively. Matters were little improved in the west. As early as 1311 the inhabitants of the west march had struggled to meet the Scots' demands. At Carlisle, Andrew de Harcla was proving the kind of energetic warden who could be capable of resisting, but in 1313 the march suffered from fresh inroads as the Scots determined to administer a sharp reminder to the marchers:

> On Tuesday after the octave of Easter [16 April] Edward de Brus, Robert's brother, invaded England by way of Carlisle, contrary to agreement, and remained there three days at the bishop's manor house, to wit, at Rose, and sent a strong detachment of his army to burn the southern and western districts during those three days. They burned many towns and two churches, taking men and women prisoners, and collected a great number of cattle in Inglewood Forest and elsewhere, driving them off with them on the Friday [19 April]: they killed few men except those who made determined resistance; but they made an attack on the city of Carlisle because of the knights and country people who were assembled there[44]

This kidnapping of victims for ransom was a handy means of waging economic warfare whilst maintaining additional pressure through deliberate terror. In the last dark days of the winter of 1313 Randolph stood before the formidable ramparts of Edinburgh itself. Though the great crag seemed to render the castle perched on its summit impregnable, the besiegers were offered a way up the cliffs by one William Francis who had pioneered the route, spurred on by a physical attachment to a lady within.

Randolph, with a 'forlorn hope' thirty strong, guided by Francis, made the perilous ascent of the crag. The garrison were distracted by a sham attempt on the east gate whilst, with the aid of the invaluable rope ladders, Randolph's commando climbed the wall, swiftly silenced the sentry and proceeded to open the gates. The defenders were put to the sword and the great castle slighted. Douglas, not to be outdone, planned to seize the great bastion of Roxburgh by an equally daring *coup de main*. He and his commando disguised themselves, unlikely as

it seems, as black cattle, which guise enabled them to approach the walls unchallenged. The handy rope ladders with grapnels secured access to the parapet and an alert sentry was swiftly dealt with '*stekit upwar with ane knyff*' before he could cry the alarm. The garrison was overpowered and their Gascon commander mortally wounded. As before, the captured works were not held but slighted 'lest the English should ever hereafter be able to lord it over the land through holding the castles'.[46]

This war of outposts was an important element in the struggle, not only in terms of winning back that which had been lost but also in winning the confidence of the Scots themselves. Many of those who had declared loyalty to both Edwards had done so through fear or resignation. The patriot resurgence and the taking of the war into England won over many of the waverers:

> All those [Scots] who were with the English were merely feigning, either because it was the stronger party, or in order to save the lands they possessed in England; for their hearts were always with their own people, although their persons might not be so.[47]

The English garrisons were frequently their own worst enemies, despoiling and abusing the populace, extracting ransoms and generally presenting what might now be described as a 'negative impression'.

In England, the death of Gaveston split the baronial opposition and at the same time removed the greatest obstacle to a 'rapprochement' with the king. By October 1313 an understanding of sorts had been arrived at. The Ordainers, in consideration for an apology over the killing, were received back into the king's grace. Earlier in the year, in May, Edward had attended his father-in-law in France to resolve his difficulties over homage for Gascony. This was particularly important as the king had negotiated a substantial advance from the papal coffers, secured on the ample revenues of the province.

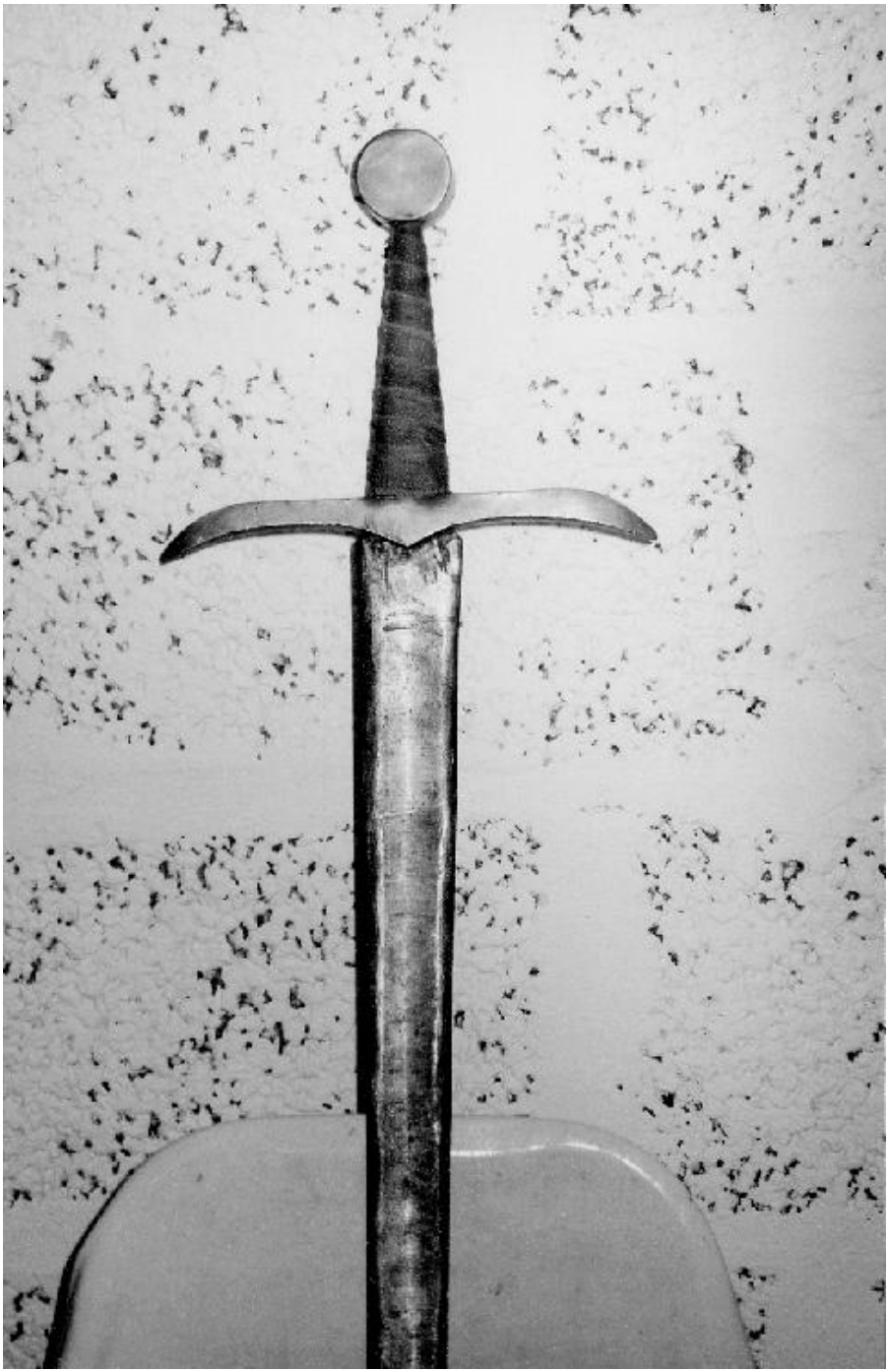
Parliament, mollified by the truce, however shaky, with the Ordainers, was still absorbed by the effects of Gaveston's fall; matters in the north came a very poor second. Nonetheless the members were minded to vote subsidies for the maintenance of the Berwick garrison

and to establish a commission under Robert Umfraville to look into the state of affairs on the marches. Hostage taking was an area of singular concern. In November it was agreed that a major offensive should be launched the following spring and the host was to muster at Berwick on 10 June.

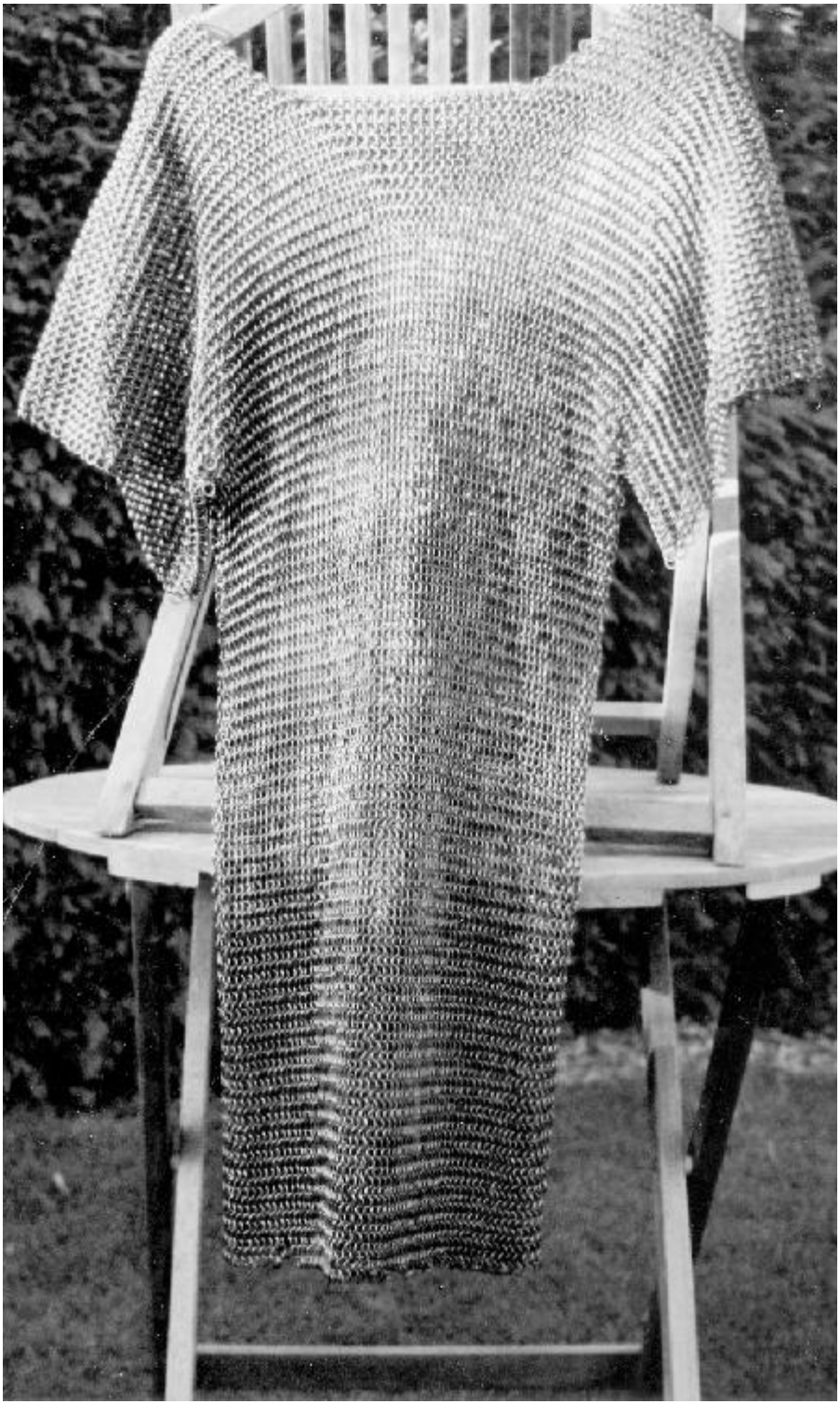
Adam Gordon, one of the king's loyal Scots, had made the journey south to present Edward with the dismal facts concerning the infamous conduct of his remaining garrisons. For his pains he was arrested at Roxburgh. It is generally supposed that the threat to Stirling was the major factor influencing King Edward's decision to take the field in 1314. The castle is said to have been under siege by Edward Bruce from the summer of 1313 and that he had agreed with the castellan, Philip Moubray, that if the fortress were not relieved by midsummer's day the following year, 1314, it would be surrendered.

Had this been the case then King Robert would have been mightily put out, for a major trial of arms was the very last eventuality he desired. A long and protracted siege sufficient to draw a large English army north flew in the face of his entire strategy to date. It does now seem, however, that the leaguer of Stirling did not begin until the spring of 1314. After the fall of Edinburgh and Roxburgh, Philip Moubray very likely did come south to press for the castle's relief and this added urgency to the planned offensive.

Perhaps a far more telling imperative was Bruce's proclamation in the Scots Parliament at Dundee in November 1313 that his enemies in Scotland had the space of twelve months within which they must offer their submission or suffer the irrevocable forfeiture of their estates. This ultimatum left Edward with no real alternative; if he failed to march then his adherents in Scotland would be forced into submission or be perpetually ruined. To ignore the reality was to lose Scotland forever. The die was therefore cast, the matter would be decided according to the hazard of battle.



A replica of a single-handed double-edged broadsword.



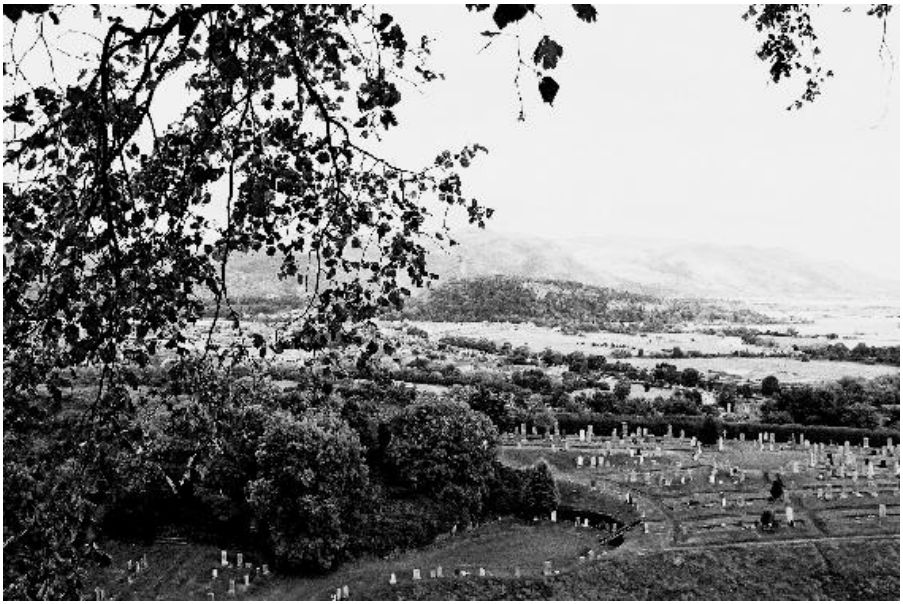
A replica of a mail shirt.

A horseman’s axe.

A replica small shield, or buckler, of the type carried by archers.

A replica of an archer’s single-handed sword.

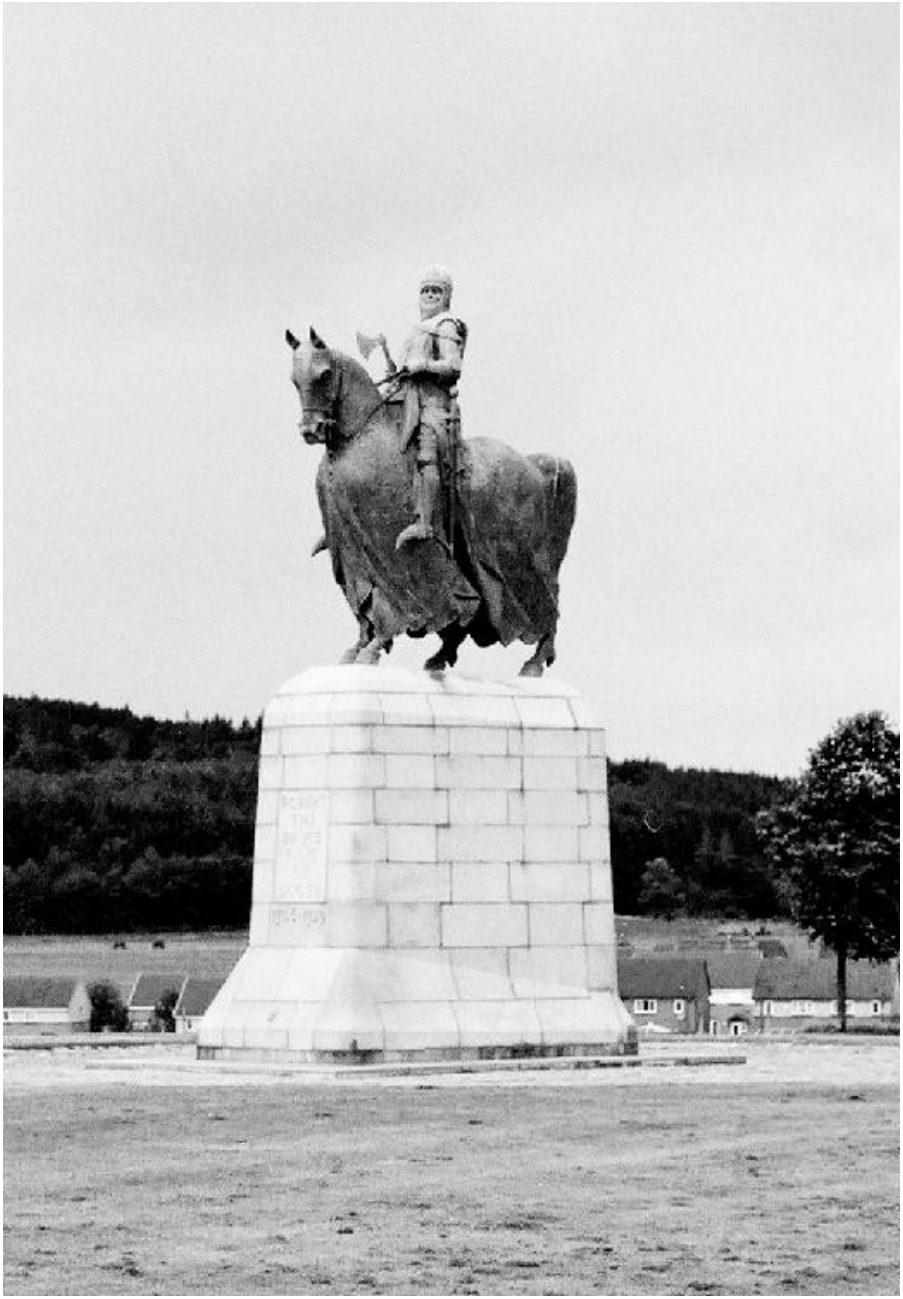
A replica of a simple infantryman's helmet.



The view northeast from Stirling Castle, across the Forth to the Wallace Tower, perched on the Abbey Craig which played a role in William Wallace's victory at Stirling Bridge in 1297. The intervening ground was more miry in the fourteenth century.

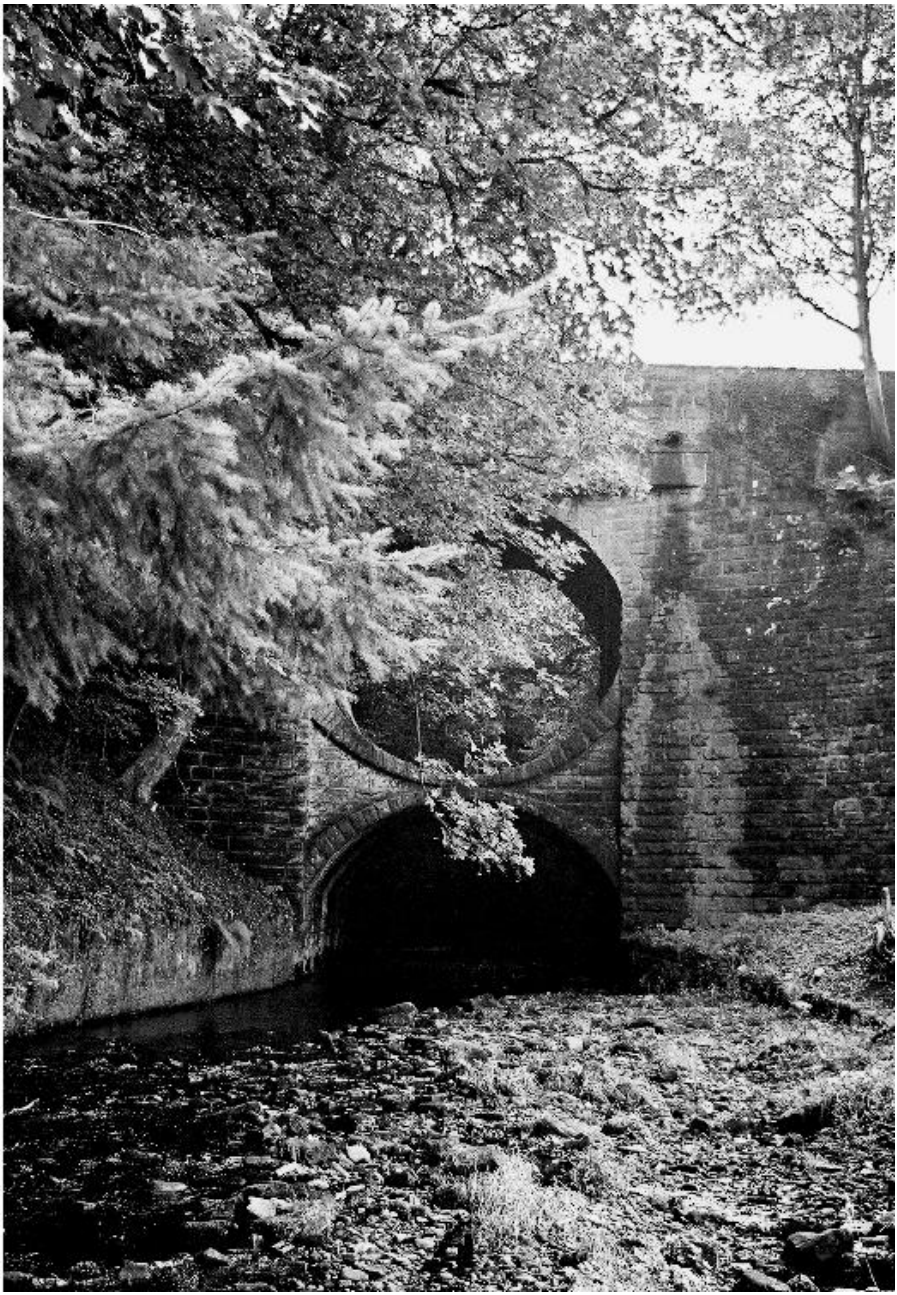
The current, unspeakably dreadful Wallace statue at the base of the Abbey Craig.

Two views of Stirling Castle, one showing the statue of Robert Bruce. Very little of the fourteenth-century enceinte remains; most of what is visible dates from the reign of James IV and after. Nonetheless, the fortress remains impressively perched on its volcanic outcrop and continues to dominate the town and its environs.



The bronze statue of Bruce located outside the present visitor centre off the A872 (Glasgow Road). It stands on the Borestone, where the Scottish standard is said to have been located during the Battle of Bannockburn. Behind, to the northwest, Coxet Hill rises.

The view of Stirling Castle, looking north from the Borestone.



Two views of the Bannockburn. The first is eastwards from New Road, looking down from the Telford Bridge, whilst the second looks westward towards the bridge. Each illustrates the sharp descent from the southern side, impossible for heavy cavalry.

The Carse, looking southeast (above) and southwest (below) from the A91, which bisects the field. This was the ground over which the main battle was fought in June 1314.

Looking north and west from the present A91. The Pelstream Burn runs by the trees to the left centre, across the intervening open ground. The line of the road and the frequency of the traffic do little for the study of the ground.

The Pelstream Burn, which witnessed the climax of the fighting on 24th June.

Chapter 5
Trial by Battle (1) – 23 June 1314

The water of my land, find her disease,
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
I would applaud thee to the very echo,
That should applaud again – Pull't off I say –
What rhurbarb, seena or what purgative drug
Would scour these English hence? …
– William Shakespeare, *MacBeth*

The Constable of Stirling came too and pointed out to the king how he had been compelled by necessity to enter upon the truce. He persuaded the king to lead an army into Scotland to defend his castle and the country.
– The Life of Edward II

The Road to Bannockburn
Here was a challenge even Edward II dare not shirk. One of the Household, Edmund de Mauley, was appointed as castellan at Cockermouth and provided with rents to sustain his role. In the east, the trusty and experienced Pembroke was made the king's lieutenant in Scotland with a primarily logistical responsibility. Antonio Pessagno, the capable Genoese banker, was placed in charge of the commissariat in England. Thomas of Lancaster and twenty-one other peers were summoned to appear at Newcastle by 1 June. By 27 March arrangements had been put in hand for the recruitment of those tradesmen vital to the army's continued success: masons, carpenters, joiners, smiths and farriers.

> When all the necessaries had been collected the king and the other magnates of the land with a great multitude of carts and baggage-wagons set out for Scotland. When the lord king had reached Berwick he made a short halt there to await the arrival

> of the army. But the Earl of Lancaster, the Earl Warenne, the Earl of Arundel, and the Earl of Warwick did not come but sent knights equipped to do their due service for them in the army. On the sixth or seventh day before the feast of St John the Baptist our king with all his army left Berwick and took his way toward Stirling. The cavalry numbered more than two thousand without counting a numerous crowd of infantry.[1]

With the muster fixed for Berwick on 19 May, the magnates' quotas were to be supplemented by a further levy of 10,000 foot. John of Argyll was appointed as commodore of a squadron detailed to patrol the western approaches; Robert's father-in-law, the Red Earl, was commanded to produce a brigade of 4,000 of his kerns. The king wrote to the Anglo-Irish lords and to the native chieftains urging their support and the final requirement was to total 22,140 foot. Neither Lancaster nor Warwick responded but Gloucester and Hereford both agreed to serve; their affinities might have swelled the cavalry arm to perhaps 2,000 lances, a formidable force.

The Lanercost chronicler takes a pejorative view of Edward's preparations, blaming the lack of support from key magnates and the subsequent disaster on the king's impious attitude:

> Now about the feast of Pentecost the king of England approached the March of Scotland, also the Earl of Gloucester, the Earl of Hereford, the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Angus, Sir Robert de Clifford, Sir John Comyn (son of murdered John), Sir Henry de Beaumont, Sir John de Segrave, Sir Pagan de Typtoft, Sir Edmund de Mauley, Sir Ingelram de Umfraville, with other barons, knights and a splendid and numerous army, if only they had had the Lord as ally. But the Earl of Lancaster and the other English earls who were of his party remained at home with their men (except those whom they were bound to send to the king in war) because the king had still refused to agree with them or to perform what he had promised. And while his noble father when he went on campaign in Scotland used to visit on his march the shrines of the English saints Thomas of Canterbury, Edmund, Hugh, William and Cuthbert, offering fair oblations, commending

himself to their prayers and bestowing liberal gifts upon monasteries, this king did none of these things. But marching with great pomp and elaborate state he took goods from the monasteries on his journey and did and said things prejudicial to the saints. In consequence of this and other things it is not surprising that confusion and everlasting shame overtook him and his army …[2]

The Scots, inevitably, could not muster anywhere like these numbers and, as ever, they were notably deficient in the cavalry arm. Professor Barrow estimates the Scottish host at somewhere between 5,000-6,000 in total and this is very likely correct (see appendix II). The bulk of the Scots comprised relatively light infantry:

Each was furnished with light armour, not easily penetrable by a sword. They had axes at their sides and carried spears in their hands. They advanced like a thick set hedge, and such a phalanx could not easily be broken.[3]

When the English army finally mustered at Wark on 10 June it included a leavening of Scots still loyal to Edward: Comyns, MacDougalls and MacNabs. A vast and cumbersome train of 200 carts was required to feed this monster. A logistical feat of no mean proportions, the marshalling and transport of the army and its great tail of supply wagons, livestock and followers was an epic in itself. It would be hard to imagine a greater contrast to the lean and hungry wraiths of Scots raiders who had so effectively terrorised the marches. This great and numerous army marched north from the Tweed in a dazzling array, the hot spring sun glancing from plate and mail, a veritable forest of pennons heralding the pride of the English chivalry. Victory must have seemed assured. For all King Robert's successes the patriots had yet to win the field in a major fight. Edinburgh was attained and occupied without opposition.

After a short halt to allow the fleet to attend for re-victualling, the host, on 22 June, advanced as far as Falkirk. Next morning the old Roman Road echoed to the tramp of thousands of marching feet and the ring of iron-shod hooves as the English set out to advance upon Stirling. Moubray had undertaken to surrender in two days' time if the castle was not relieved. Having marched over twenty long and

wearing miles the day before, the English were still stirring and ready for the next stage at dawn on 23 June. As the drummers beat out reveille and the sergeants cursed in the penumbra of vanishing darkness, men tumbled from the sleep of exhaustion and girded themselves for possible contact. Prickers and spies would have brought news that the Scots were in force between the host and their goal of Stirling. Would the Scots fight? Surely the odds were too great; Falkirk a grim reminder of English prowess and might.

In the vast sprawling encampment, servants would be scurrying with sustenance for the lords and magnates in their gilded pavilions, bright flashes of opulent colour, a dazzling of silk, amidst the tan humdrum of the tattered canvas and hastily constructed shelters. Many would have spent the warm spring evening wrapped in their cloaks. The ring of armourers' hammers 'gives dreadful note of preparation'. For the army's vast tail of artisans, sutlers and whores, this was a busy time, priests moving amongst the companies, barbers shaving lords and gentry, whilst the commons swigged small beer and took a mouthful of bread.

By the time the sun had risen, the tents would be struck, the fires extinguished, baggage stowed and horses saddled. As today might bring a general engagement the army would move in a guarded column of march: a screen of hobilers and prickers scouting ahead, whilst the mounted van marshalled beneath the pennons of their unit commanders. Men would ride fully harnessed, for fear of ambuscade. The van was the place of danger and therefore of most coveted honour. Hereford and Gloucester were joined by John Comyn with a core of tried and experienced knights.

As the van moved off at the walk, the main body prepared to march on; further squadrons of horse with the foot toiling in their wake. These were a deal less colourful, mere 'warriors for the working day', some harnessed, some with gambesons, a forest of bills and the slung bows of the archers. The king with his household and heralds brought up the rear battle, a gorgeous parade of blazons and silk, polished harness, proud, chafing destriers.[4] Behind them, the great, toiling workaday convoy of carts and wagons, an untidy mass of camp-followers with a stiffening of foot to guard against intruders. A final, mounted detachment acted as rearguard.

If there was a likely perception that the Scots might not risk a

general engagement, there was every expectation that they might launch an ambush or series of ambushes against the exposed flanks of the great sinuous column. An army is vulnerable on the line of march, especially where the going is narrow and hemmed by trees. Today, a more concentrated deployment of parallel forces moving over open ground was denied by the topography, for on this fine Sunday in June, the English were constrained by the sylvan confines of the great Tor Wood.

This was a dark primeval place. Not the ordered acres of regulated pines we see at Kielder and other plantations but a great sprawling wildwood of birch alder and oak, dense undergrowth clogging the verges of Dere Street as it drove through the canopy of trees, a thin ribbon of rutted track. The deep silence of the woods would descend like a blanket, leaves cutting out the strengthening sun, birdsong drowned by the tramp of marching men, the jingle of harness and the groaning axles of the transport. Those at the rear would be forced to avoid the spreading carpet of horse dung, and a rising cloud of choking dust, men dry-mouthed and sweating as they marched. Scouts from both sides were ranging ahead, Scottish horse under the Earl Marischal, would have been spotted by the English hobilers and word sent back, a stiffening in the leading ranks of the van, thrill of contact passing like a current. Keith sent word back to Bruce who trotted to meet his lieutenant, contact more imminent than perhaps they perceived. It was by now near midday and the English van would soon be clear of the woods.

Philip de Moubray had sallied from Stirling with a guard of mailed knights, a Scots safe conduct in his pouch. Cheered by the mass of horse and foot, he trotted down the great column till he reached the royal standard, there to bend his knee before the sovereign and offer congratulations upon relief of the garrison, now technically accomplished. King Edward appeared to have achieved his primary aim, the succour of Stirling, but whom was he to fight? Where was the foe? Would the Scots give battle? From the king's perspective a fight was needed, otherwise the outlay of treasure incurred in raising the vast array and marching thus far was mere show and nothing more.

His concern, at this point, would not be whether he could defeat the Scots but whether they would accept the hazard. Bruce had hitherto taken pains to avoid just such an encounter; as a guerilla he

was brilliantly successful, but there was nothing to indicate he could command a large army in open field. Wallace had tried, had done so valiantly and had suffered ignominious if not ignoble defeat. Would Bruce now chance all his gains on a single throw? If indeed he was so resolved, then how and where would he fight?

For the van, such a debate on grand tactics had declined in importance. At last they were clear of the woods, before them a shallow incline led to the Bannockburn, before the road was again swallowed in the trees of the New Forest. It was not the ground which excited their attention, rather it was the Lion of Scotland blazoned in silk, floating above a knot of mounted knights, supported by a company of foot. They were gazing at Robert Bruce, King of Scots, King Hobbe himself.

As yet, neither side had had the opportunity to judge the mettle of the other. From the Scots perspective this was probably just as well for they were heavily outnumbered and completely so in terms of available cavalry. King Robert was well informed of the march and prior muster of his foes. For a month and more his own more workaday host had drilled in the sheltering confines of the Tor Wood, through which their adversaries had just passed.

The time had not been wasted, men drilled relentlessly in their spear formations till they became as one with their staves, officers and men able to deploy and manoeuvre with practised ease. Indeed the English would have passed the tell-tale signs of occupation without, however, gaining a glimpse.

To drill in woodland had a number of advantages. The place teemed with game and training could be conducted virtually in secrecy, difficult for a spy to get close enough to make an accurate assessment of numbers. The trees provided shelter and fuel but it would be difficult for Bruce to feel any overpowering sense of confidence, quite probably the reverse.

Whether it was his brother's rashness or other factors that had provoked this crisis the fact of its arising placed all the patriots' previous gains in mortal jeopardy. Wallace had drilled his men, had chosen his ground well, but this had not been enough. He had been unable to form a tactical response to the deadly partnering of missile and shock troops. His own heavy horse had failed the test and his archers paid the price of that failure. King Robert would have to do a

great deal better if his cause was to prosper in the face of such odds.

Stirling Castle on its rearing volcanic spur is the cork in the bottle that guards the narrow neck between lowlands and the rugged west beyond.[5] The town lies to the east of the fortress and the River Forth loops and bends along its eastward course. The Bannockburn, a lesser tributary, rises in the west and follows its own wandering flow into the swollen waters of the Forth. A second burn, the Pelstream, flows into the Bannockburn, its course forming a line, not unlike the head of a pitchfork, with the tines pointing at the Bridle Path.

West of the old Roman road the ground rises towards those vigorous fastnesses that form the highlands of Scotland, but to the east lay a flat, alluvial plain, the Carse of Stirling.[6] In the fourteenth century this low ground was a patchwork of small fields, cut with expanses of peat bog. The New Park, which marks the western rim of the flat land, was the remains of an ancient hunting reserve. To the south the Tor Wood spills over a range of undulating folds and hills. The Carse itself becomes markedly wetter as it extends toward the Forth, a stretch of ground known as the 'Polls' or 'Pows'.[7]

King Robert had ordered his engineers to dig a line of man (and horse) traps along the north bank of the Bannockburn and covering both the existing crossings. This meant, in practical effect, that an attacker would be obliged to advance by Dere Street or the lesser way that ran parallel through the hamlet of Bannock, cross the burn, say half a mile to the east, before angling to join the main road by St Ninian's a mile or so further on. These pits were simple holes or 'pots' concealed beneath foliage and sown with sharp pointed stakes or caltrops, a serious menace to man and mount.

Meandering in its small valley, the Bannockburn separated the two densely-wooded areas. By noon on the 23 June the English army occupied the more southerly, the Tor Wood, whereas the Scots held the forested New Park to the north. This dense belt of trees stood between the invaders and the great rock of Stirling Castle.

Immediately north of the Bannockburn, the hills of New Park and the local eminence of Coxet Hill crowded the west, descending again to more level and cultivated ground, farmed by the inhabitants of St Ninians and Bannock. East of this fertile shelf the ground again descended sharply toward the spongy wetlands of the Carse.

Bruce had been faced with attempting to divine his enemy's

intentions and then making his dispositions accordingly. He was not, at this juncture, committed to the need for a major battle. If the English were obliging enough and so tactically unimaginative as to attempt simply to batter a passage through to the castle along the line of the Roman road, they would deploy over the relatively level ground that lay to the east, Balquhidderock, terrain that would not unduly impede cavalry. By 'mining' the lower reaches adjacent to both crossing points, Bruce would do much to inhibit this, but he also needed to dispose his foot brigades in such a manner as would suffice to block the available approaches whilst retaining tactical flexibility.

With the army of King Robert holding the higher ground and overlooking Balquhidderock, the road to the castle wound around the lower reaches, inside the New Park, the actual trackway passing between the Borestone and the Bannockburn. The line occupied by the patriot forces was, on the right, protected by the untamed spread of forest and scrub; the left clung to the natural line of the escarpment running rearward to St Ninian's Kirk.[8] Randolph commanded the first of four Scots brigades and this comprised the men of the northeast, from Moray, Ross, Inverness, Elgin, Nairn and Forres, and he was posted by St Ninian's Kirk toward the northern Flank of the New Park.

Edward Bruce led the patriots of Buchan, Man, Angus, the Mearns, Strathearn, Menteith and Lennox, his brigade livened by a torrent of wild Gallowegians. Walter the High Steward was, at least in name, the general of the third brigade, but, as he was of tender years, his role was effectively filled by the redoubtable Douglas, followed by men from the border marches and Clydesdale. These two brigades were initially deployed between the king's own division and that led by Moray, though Douglas may subsequently have been moved to form a more effective rearguard behind Randolph.

The last and most powerful division was under the king's direct command and beneath his proud banner were also mustered the Highlanders brought by Angus Og – his MacDonalds, Camerons, Campbells, Frasers, Gordons, MacKintoshes, MacLeans, MacGregors, Rosses and Sinclairs. Bruce's division was stationed to cover the crossings of the Bannockburn, the most likely axis of attack ('The Entry'). Bruce had his 500 light horse under Keith, who operated as a screen of skirmishers whilst the patriots laboured to improve their defences. The miry course of the Bannockburn with the Pelstream was

a sufficient barrier and this natural obstacle was augmented by the minefields of 'pots'. The King's Park forms the western flank of the approaches to Stirling Castle; it is habitually dry and cavalry can ride quite freely along the line of the road. East of the road lay a stretch of open ground, mainly under the plough, but at its easterly limit this ground dips sharply down toward the much wetter ground of the Carse itself.

Keith's Horse, though potentially formidable, were not viewed as a counter to the weight of the English chivalry, most would be light cavalry or hobilers; tactically their role could be to engage English archers should these, as would be likely, deploy on the flanks of any attack. Bruce could trust in his spears to frustrate the horse but they could only continue if they were protected from missile troops, otherwise any engagement had the potential for a repeat of the debacle at Falkirk, sixteen years before.

By the time the English were completing their long march through the confines of the Tor Wood, King Robert's initial dispositions were complete. His own brigade, which had been stationed by Torwood, had now been moved up to deploy along the line of trees crowding upon the New Park; his brother's command was stationed on the rising ground to the left. To his left, Randolph was positioned around St Ninian's, overlooking the Carse, whilst Douglas now occupied the rearward by the Borestone. The reserve of camp followers and lightly armed kerns took up dead ground to the rear, Keith's hobilers ranged in front.

That morning the Scots, like their adversaries, would have risen early and consumed a frugal meal. Almost certainly they would have heard mass and the king would have held a conference with his principal officers. Even before the English van hove into view it was clear they had only two choices, to advance through the New Park or attempt a longer, flank march across the uncertain ground of the Carse, an option scarcely likely to carry much appeal. As the approaches over the higher, dry ground were 'mined' nearest the crossings the intention was to herd the enemy into narrow lanes.

Preparations were thus well in hand, it remained only for the king to walk amongst his men, radiating reassurance. For medieval man the presence of his king on the field ('a touch of Harry in the night') is powerful medicine, when a man's throat is dry and his bowels

uncertain. This army had trained and drilled for weeks, its soldiers were veterans of a score of skirmishes, it had many successes to its name but it had yet to best an English army in open field. Both sides would remember Falkirk. Now the patriots were positioned to completely dominate the approaches to the castle. Edward, if he wished to dislodge them, would be obliged to execute a frontal assault oven the generally-unfavourable ground. If he was to seek to outflank their position then he would be forced to pick his way over the treacherous slime of the Carse. Neither was an inviting prospect.

King Edward, acquainted with de Moubray's welcome intelligence, convened a hasty council of war. Despite the obvious strength of the patriots' dispositions, he nevertheless may have resolved upon an immediate attack, involving horse and foot combined whilst a commanded party of cavalry under Clifford and Beaumont attempted a flank march around the rim of the Carse to slip between the Scottish host and the castle. They would thus be placed to complete the technical relief of the fortress and equally handily deployed to deal death and ruin upon any stragglers if the patriots broke beneath the main assault. Whether the twin advance of the van and the commanded party of horse proceeded as a result of command decisions or by accident remains unclear. To probe your enemy's front whilst feeling around the flank is not without sense. If your van runs into solid opposition the flanking party might unnerve the defender sufficiently to cause a withdrawal, though, as the chroniclers assert, it does appear that neither force was aware of the actions of the other.

If Edward II of England was not a great commander, nor even a particularly good one, he was not the fool many subsequent writers have claimed. His resonance through history is generally viewed entirely in pejorative terms. It must be conceded that he had, technically at least, succeeded in effecting the relief of Stirling Castle, thus securing his immediate tactical objective. In terms of the wider grand tactics, he was seeking a decisive encounter with the Scots. There was no obvious folly in this, he was aware his army was the superior force in terms of numbers and with a very marked, seemingly invincible advantage in terms of heavy cavalry.

He undoubtedly viewed the situation as similar to that which had faced his father before Falkirk, the greatest risk being that the Scots would revert to Fabian tactics and rob him of a decisive engagement

in the field. Given the odds it would be very likely they would do so. The combined arms at his disposal – horse, foot and archers – had, when properly and effectively combined, won a resounding triumph in the earlier battle. Neither the king, nor his officers would, however, be unmindful of the lessons of Courtrai; that the pride of the French chivalry should be at first confounded and then destroyed by spears provided a telling antidote to vaunting hubris. Edward would have certainly believed that he could win but not necessarily that the victory would be easily gained. In no place was the ground ideal and the Scots had held station for weeks, ample time to acquaint themselves with every nuance of the terrain and how to use this to their full advantage.

First blood

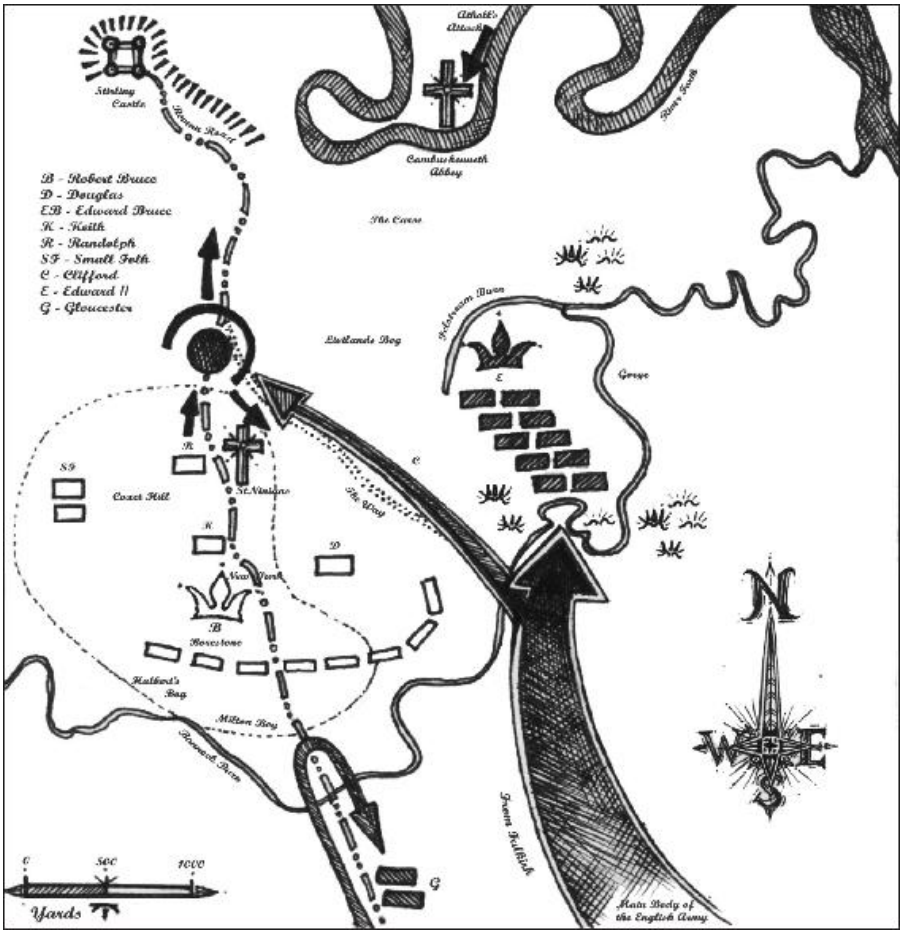
As the English van debouched from the dense woodland to espy their enemies in front, Bruce was mounted on a humble palfrey, his intention was to confer with Keith and steal a glance at his enemy's strength. Should the English, however, come on along the line of the road, hemmed onto the narrow way by the lethal scattering of pots, then an opportunity might arise to deploy his spears and turn them back with a bloody nose.

The great lion banner proclaimed the presence of the King of Scots and proved a certain lure to the hot-blooded chivalry on the far side of the valley. A posse of knights, including Gloucester and Hereford, touched spurs; the latter's nephew, Henry de Bohun was with them.[9] Here indeed was a prize, the chance to end the conflict and win the day with a single thrust. De Bohun, mounted on his fine destrier, his lance couched and held across the saddle, gathered momentum and bore down on the king. Sensibly, Robert should simply have withdrawn; he was not fully attired for war, mounted on a mere palfrey and armed only with a timber-shafted horseman's axe.

At the very last moment, or fraction of a moment before impact, the king turned his mount to avoid the lunge and, rising in the stirrups, dealt his adversary a fearful blow with the battleaxe, cleaving both helmet and skull. 'I have broken my good battleaxe,' was his dry observation when his officers, rightly, remonstrated with him for taking so great a risk.

> The Earl of Gloucester and the Earl of Hereford commanded the first line. On Sunday, which was the vigil of St John's day, as they passed by a certain wood and were approaching Stirling Castle, the Scots were seen straggling under the trees as if in flight and a certain knight, Henry de Boun [Bohun] pursued them with the Welsh to the entrance of the wood. For he had in mind that if he found Robert Bruce there he would either kill him or carry him off captive. But when he had come hither, Robert himself came suddenly out of his hiding-place in the wood, and the said Henry, seeing he could not resist the multitude of the Scots, turned his horse with the intention of returning to his companions; but Robert opposed him and struck him on the head with an axe he carried in his hand. His squire, trying to protect or rescue his lord, was overwhelmed by the Scots.[10]

The luckless de Bohun was not the only one to miscalculate, for the whole advance was presently in difficulties, very serious difficulties. Whilst on the road the attackers could advance at a steady pace; once they were required to deploy against the massed ranks of the Scottish spears from King Robert's division now arrayed against them, it was a very different matter. The dense belts of hidden obstacles that constituted a threat to both horse and man and the serried points of the waiting *schiltron* combined to frustrate even the most ardent valour. Command of the van was exercised jointly by Gloucester and Hereford, complicated with the usual chivalric rivalries.[11] The charge, which can never have ridden faster than a slow trot, was soon in difficulties. Stung by obstacles and unsupported, the horse could achieve nothing. Gloucester, attempting to reform, was ignominiously unhorsed and obliged to retire on foot, the attack faltered and stalled.



Bannockburn, 23 June 1314.

At first it appeared that Clifford and de Beaumont might fare better.[12] They commanded perhaps three hundred horse and cleverly followed the line of the bridle path on the eastern flank – the course of which lay below the sharp decline. The going was relatively dry and the great bulk of the castle reared ahead, the plain before apparently devoid of any enemy. The second water obstacle of the Pelstream was gained and traversed without hindrance, the column continuing its line of advance, heading northwest along the bridle path to a point almost due east of St Ninian's, which lay half a mile or so to their left.

King Robert, ever watchful, spotted the English pennons and was obliged to issue Randolph with a sharp order to engage forthwith. As the phalanx, its hedgehog points bristling, descended to cut the line of advance, the English knights swung around to meet the challenge. Gray takes up the story; his father, Sir Thomas, a border veteran was on the field, so we may assume the author had his account from one who was present:

> While the advanced guard were following this road, Robert Lord de Clifford and Henry de Beaumont, with three hundred men-at-arms, made a circuit upon the other side of the wood towards the castle, keeping the open ground. Thomas Randolph, Earl of Moray, Robert de Brus's nephew, who was leader of the Scottish advanced guard, hearing that his uncle had repulsed the advance guard of the English on the other side of the wood, thought that he must have his share [of glory] and issuing from the wood with his division marched across the open ground towards the two afore-mentioned lords.[13]

Gray goes on to report that Beaumont attends upon Moray's convenience calling to his riders that they should permit the Scots to fully deploy before charging. Sir Thomas observes that this is unwise, to which de Beaumont retorts that if the knight is leery, he may retire![14] A fierce mêlée now developed, the horse lapping around the *schiltron*, lances clashing with resolute spears, swords and maces hacking and slashing as the horsemen sought to break these impudent foot. They could make no headway. Sir Thomas, throwing himself boldly upon the foe to scorn de Beaumont's taunt, was unhorsed and

taken, Sir William Deyncourt slain; other saddles were emptied.[15] Time and again the swirling mass of horsemen broke off and reformed, seeking the crucial breakthrough and entry that momentum must surely provide. It did not, the circle of spears remained unmoved.

As their predecessors had discovered in the opening charges at Falkirk, the knights, however valiant, could not break the *schiltron* unless the spears were first thinned by the clothyard storm. As the English attack ran out of steam Randolph pushed his infantry on to complete the unthinkable, tenant farmers and tradesmen besting the pride of English chivalry. Moray's men stood firm, like an island in the eye of the hurricane, buffeted but not at any point broken. The somnolent air of a warm late spring afternoon was bruised by the clangour of war, blades hacking on points, the sweating foot choking now on the great clouds of dust and steam. The men would have been taught to strike at the horses' faces, causing the mounts to rear and throw their mailed riders. Once on the ground the knight was very much more vulnerable, a man of rank could expect to be grabbed and dragged within the circle of points as a captive, the less illustrious might feel the dirk's cold point enter through face or genitals.

As the battle eddied and swirled, Douglas suggested he might advance his banners to Moray's relief, though the king demurred as Randolph was holding fast and appeared in no need of aid. The combat, however, was finely balanced and Bruce would be fully aware of the carnage that could ensue if the spears wavered and a gap appeared – the horsemen would ride through and over like the spilling of the dyke. The order for Douglas to march was given and the second *schiltron* moved up. The sudden appearance of fresh numbers did not immediately dismay the English, some of whom turned to meet the new threat, but the fury had gone out of the attack, men and beasts were tired and bloodied, some, though perhaps not many, had fallen and there was no sign of the enemy wavering. Moray, timing the moment to perfection, ordered his men to march on and they rose as one, steadied their staves and began to push forward.

This was enough; the English broke off, one group riding for the castle, the second and larger formation retiring by the route they'd come, the jeers and huzzas of their jubilant opponents ringing in their ears, more than a few saddles empty. Twice the English cavalry had

advanced in different sectors of the first day's field and twice they had been checked and discomfited. De Bohun and Deyncourt were dead, Gray and others taken. Scottish losses had been trifling. If the Scots required proof of their prowess, the solid boost to morale that only victory can bring, then this was it; for Bruce and his officers, a moment of quiet self congratulation. The battle was not yet won but they had made a most satisfactory beginning.

So thoroughly had the English been chastened that Moray's weary men received a rapturous welcome from their comrades. Bruce too was impressed, to the extent that he was prepared to dilute his customary caution and ask the men outright if they thought they could win the larger fight that lay in prospect:

> I am full well assured that many an [English] heart shall waver that seemed erstwhile of mighty valour. And if the heart be dismayed, the body is not worth a mite. I trow therefore that a good ending shall follow this beginning. Nevertheless I say not this to you in order that ye shall follow my desire to fight; for with you will rest the whole matter. If you think it expedient that we fight, we shall fight; and if ye will that we depart, your desire will be fulfilled. I shall consent to do in either fashion right as ye shall decide. Therefore speak plainly your desire.[16]

The decision

In the long lines of English horse and foot, still stretched out along the line of the Roman Road, there was little cause for celebration, both initial skirmishes had ended badly with the flower of the invaders' chivalry vanquished. Losses, in all probability, had been light but the dents to prestige were not inconsiderable. It must be questioned to what extent the morale of the rank and file suffered as a result of their betters' chastisement, perhaps less than might be imagined. It would not be unnatural for the foot, 'the poor, bloody infantry', to enjoy a quiet smirk at the discomfiture of the valiant horse, perhaps even a sly sense of admiration for those doughty Scottish spearmen.

For King Edward and his generals, Pembroke, Gloucester, Hereford and Clifford, several of whom had experienced the mettle of their foes at first hand, there was some serious thinking to be done. It was clear that the direct route to Stirling, passing through the Entry, proceeding

along Dere Street and then through the New Park, was impassable. By mining the road and using his brigades effectively King Robert had barred the door; the attempt to outflank, if that had been Clifford and de Beaumont's purpose, had also foundered.

On this basis, the only viable approach was over the Carse, by no means an attractive prospect, given the nature of the ground and the prevailing wetness. Logistical considerations were now pressing: men and, above all, valuable horses needed fodder and refreshment, even those who had not been engaged were wearied by their fatiguing marches. The afternoon was, by now, well advanced and it appeared inconceivable that the army could mount any further offensive action that day.

To get the army from its present position, strung out along Dere Street and hemmed by trees, onto the Carse would be no easy matter; quite the reverse, it would be a major exercise in controlled manoeuvre. To advance toward the Entry, or the lower crossing at Bannock, would be to invite a repeat of Wallace's earlier triumph, defeat in detail as the Scottish spears swooped like hawks upon the extended lines and their great tail of carts and *bouches inutiles*. The only safe option was to swing the entire column to the right, move northeast over the bridle path and cross by the lower fords. This had the added advantage that the steep banks would have levelled out and the crossing would be easier for both horse and man.

Moving by companies, the foot began to filter through the trees, the horse picking their way over footpaths and tracks, sergeants and the marshals hoarse with bellowing, red-faced and doubtless evil-tempered in the afternoon sun. Once clear of the trees the army would have to negotiate the steep decline onto the Carse and pick their way across its damp and miry surface. We can imagine the difficulties this operation entailed: the vast English host, debouching from the trees in groups that would coalesce and swell over the tiny fields beyond, great tramping legions, kicking up a confusion of dust and noise, laced with the pithy exhortation of officers and NCOs. Manhandling the cumbersome train over the difficult ground and down the incline would be no easy matter, something of a logistical feat.

Men and beasts would have sought refreshment at St Peter's well or from the waters of the burn, but the crossing places would quickly be turned into viscous quagmires by the passage of so many. The

chroniclers advise that English pioneers made free use of building materials stripped from the hapless town of Bannock, the common view being that timbers and doors were used to bridge the many streams and pools of the Pows. More recent analysis has suggested that the despoliation was more systematic and the purpose was to reinforce the fords, to use timber and boards to create what would be a crude form of plank or 'corduroy' road.[17] A similar process would be adopted to shore the crossing of the Pelstream.

As this great lumbering avalanche of armoured men, barded horses and palfreys, wagons, carts, the sprawling caravanserai of camp followers, descended onto the plain, someone had to decide what to do next, to select a safe and suitable camping ground. This singularly unenviable chore fell upon the provosts or harbingers who were responsible for billeting. The job of the billeting officer has never been an easy one. In this instance they were charged to find dry, level ground, where the lords might pitch their pavilions, with water for the horses and as secure as might be found.

Security was key given the considerable reputation which the Scots now possessed as guerrillas. There was every reason to suspect they would seek to capitalize on their earlier successes by launching a series of spoiling raids against the English lines. Such concerns were hardly fanciful: the Scots knew the ground, they were highly-skilled fighters, led by dynamic and aggressive officers, their morale was boosted by success and there were many throats ripe for slitting. Time and again the Scots would demonstrate a flair for 'beating up' enemy quarters. Tellingly in the course of the ill-fated Weardale campaign in 1327, they would come within an ace of capturing Edward III.

These harassed harbingers, therefore, had three primary considerations: security, the approach to Stirling and comfort. The ground adjacent to the ford would have been churned and muddied beyond immediate repair; the more easterly reaches of the Carse were studded by the polls and bisected by a myriad of small brooks and watercourses, equally unsuitable. That area which lay in the deep bow of the Bannockburn and the Pelstream, the two streams forming an inverted 'U' offered the best available prospect.

In terms of comfort it was the ease of magnates and gentry that counted, the commons could shift for themselves; tents would have to be unloaded and pitched, harness stripped and burnished, squires

sweating to remove rust and oil the links. Fodder for the destriers was provided from the wagons, the forage on the Carse would not impart the same vitality as oats and the beasts were better mettlesome if a fight was coming. Fuel was sparse and any available timber not sequestered by the pioneers would be pressed into service.

Nobody was expecting a quiet or relaxed sojourn on the Carse, the foe was too close, the conditions too cramped and there were those who sought solace in strong drink and waxed raucous as the long summer evening wore on. The whole spreading panoply would have resembled an entire people on the march: the great clutter of carts, the *bacaudae* of artisans, whores, sutlers, vintners and opportunists who made up the tail, selling each of their wares. Amidst the endless ranks of the foot, few of whom would have stripped off their harness or jacks for fear of Scots attack, the smells of cooking, stale sweat, the odours of unwashed men and beasts, competed to pollute the clear air. 'But there was no rest', complains the Life of Edward II, 'for they spent it sleepless, expecting the Scots rather to attack by night than to await for battle by day'.[18]

The king may have entertained his senior officers but the mood cannot have been jolly. Surrounded by a glitterati of pretty young knights, Edward was expecting, next day, to resume his advance upon Stirling, his army set in proper battle array, horse in the centre with archers, *en masse*, on both flanks. Such a formation could cope with whatever offensive the Scots might decide. What had patently not occurred to him was the possibility the Scots might launch an all out pre-emptive assault on the present position. With the inestimable benefit of hindsight it is clear this was grossly negligent and yet there was no existing precedent for such bold action.

Wallace's victory at Stirling, though brilliant, was opportunistic and gifted by the incompetence of the English officers. Longshanks, at Falkirk, had demonstrated that the partnering of shock and missile troops, properly harnessed, was a proven battle winner. Bruce had no novel troop types, possessed no new reservoir of heavy horse. That the English had been worsted during the day's encounters could not be gainsaid, there were empty places at the king's board, De Bohun, Deyncourt and Grey but, in the grander scheme, these reverses were mere pinpricks, the potency of the host not even dented. The Scots could surely not expect to repeat their successes in open field.

Not all were sanguine, Gloucester undoubtedly spoke for many officers when he bravely opined that the advance should be postponed for twenty-four hours to allow the men to rest and recuperate. He was scornfully shouted down, the king, in his shallow hubris, even going so far as to accuse the earl of faintheartedness, a bitter and underserved slur. If any of the other magnates secretly agreed with Gloucester they kept their opinions to themselves. The king would have his advance on the morrow and the army must accept whatever hazard the foe chose to offer. Gloucester may have been suspect as it was he who had warned Bruce years before after the Red Comyn had 'spilled the beans' to Longshanks. Certainly the author of *The Life of Edward II* feels that Gloucester's advice reflected widely-held concerns:

> Wherefore our men [the English], the veterans that is, and the more experienced, advised that we should not fight that day, but rather wait for the morrow, both on account of the importance of the feast [that of St John the Baptist] and the toil they had already undergone. This practical and honourable advice was rejected by the younger men as idle and cowardly … The Earl of Gloucester counseled the king not to go forth to battle that day, but to rest on account of the feast, and let his army recuperate as much as possible. But the king spurned the earl's advice, and growing very heated with him, charged him with treachery and deceit.[19]

What of matters on 'the other side of the hill?' The Scots too were in hurried council. Bruce was disinclined to fight again – the day's combat had achieved its objectives. Randolph and the ever-valiant Douglas were all for moving onto the offensive. Bruce had remained steadfastly opposed to an attack – the risk was enormous: all that he had won by patience, skill and guile could be lost in an hour.

> For Robert Bruce, knowing himself unequal to the strength of the king of England in strength or fortune, decided that it would be better to resist our king by secret warfare rather than dispute his right in open battle. Indeed I might be tempted to sing the praises of Sir Robert Bruce did not the guilt of homicide and the dark stain of treachery bid me keep silent.[20]

Douglas, Randolph and Edward Bruce were all for seizing the moment and committing to an all out offensive; stirring sentiments but Bruce had cause to think long and hard. He was an experienced commander, it was obvious his opponent was not. His men were fresh and buoyed by victory, in the mêlée they had more than proved their worth. Yet the fact was no Scots army since Stirling had beaten the English in open field, and that only in exceptional circumstances; neither Dunbar nor Falkirk offered encouragement. If he attacked and won, the entire nature of the war would shift, no longer would he be the under-dog rising from the heather to bite the enemy's ankles, avoiding the lure and hazard of battle. If he lost, then Scotland was ruined, plunged back into the desolation of defeat.

It is said that Sir Alexander Seton who had just defected to the patriot cause convinced the king that the moment was right: 'Now's the time'. This enthusiastic admonition from one so newly arrived from the English camp finally swayed the cautious King Robert to hazard all. 'It greatly pleased his [Bruce's] heart and he was persuaded that men of such mind, if they set their strength to it, must indeed be night hard to vanquish'. At this time of year the northern nights are usually both short and mild. Sunrise on Monday 24 June, the feast of St John the Baptist, would be around 3.34 am. Gulping down a mess of oats (those who had the stomach, doubtless fortified with a dram), the Scots had, by 2.00 am, heard mass. Half an hour later dawn's pale outriders were visible in the sky and the *schiltrons* were on the move, the four brigades advancing in echelon. Edward Bruce took the van on the right, followed by Randolph and then Douglas. The king's strong brigade formed the rear, with Keith's horse in reserve. Posterity had cause that day to be indebted to Bernard, the Abbot of Arbroath, who took down the text of the king's speech to the host:

> My lords, my people, accustomed to enjoy that full freedom for which in times gone by the kings of Scotland have fought many a battle. For eight years or more I have struggled with much labour for my right to the kingdom and for honourable liberty. I have lost brothers, friends and kinsmen. Your own kinsmen have been made captive, and bishops and priests are locked in prison. Our country's nobility has poured forth its blood in war. These barons you can see before you, clad in mail, are bent

> upon destroying me and obliterating my kingdom, nay, our whole nation. They do not believe we can survive. They glory in their warhorses and equipment. For us, the name of the Lord must be our hope of victory in battle; if you heartily repent of your sins you will be victorious, under God's command.[21]

The die was cast.

Chapter 6
Trial by Battle (2) – 24 June 1314

Ring the alarum-bell! Blow wind, come wrack;
At least we'll die with harness on our back!
– William Shakespeare, *MacBeth*

Sir Alexander de Seton, who was in the service of England and had come thither with the King, secretly left the English army, went to Robert de Brus in the wood, and said to him: 'Sir, this is the time if ever you intend to undertake to reconquer Scotland. The English have lost heart and are discouraged, and expect nothing but a sudden, open attack.

Then he described their condition, and pledged his head on pain of being hanged and drawn, that if he [Bruce] would attack them on the morrow he would defeat them easily without [much] loss.
– Sir Thomas Gray, *Scalacronica*[1]

Advance to contact
Each *schiltron* was deployed in eight ranks with 188 spears in each, the men removing one or both of their leather-soled shoes to ensure a firmer grip on the sodden earth. A final reserve, or 'small folk', was moved forward to the line of the ridge so that they might be engaged to exploit any opportunity as it arose. The stage was thus set. History, as a rule, tends more to the insidious than the dramatic, rarely do events move with the eloquence and drama of stage or screen, as though scripted. 24 June 1314 is a marked exception, for this is one of those days that change history. King Robert had taken the momentous decision to give battle. That he should have hesitated beforehand is not to be remarked upon, such prudence was well-founded. His army, though tested, had never undergone the full rite of battle against a superior foe, one whose numbers were greater and whose potency, at least on paper, was higher. That the day would be decisive could not now be doubted and the fate of nations would hang in the balance.

Edward II did not expect to be attacked, his dispositions were defensive in that he sought to defend against hit-and-run raids rather than a concerted tactical offensive. To date the *schiltrons* had not been deployed as attacking formations; it is much easier to dispose of large bodies of spearmen in defensive hedges than to marshal them to take the fight to the foe. The sight of the Scottish brigades debouching from the tree cover and deploying in line of battle must, in the growing light of the warm spring morning, have been distinctly unnerving.

It has been suggested that king Edward had prepared his army for battle but had assumed that the threat would come from the north rather than the west, and that his mounted brigades were facing across the Pelstream toward Stirling Castle.[2] As the traditional or likely deployment of the period would involve the mounted arm in the centre with knights formed in parallel bodies under their bannerets, and archers on the flanks, it is possible this is correct.

Alternatively such an interpretation might assume a greater degree of planning than was in fact the case, though the Pelstream would not form a particularly severe obstacle. In the event, the bulk of the fighting on the English side would be undertaken by the cavalry with initial support from a skirmish line of bowmen and, later, a more structured but flawed deployment.

In this version the English army forms front, ten squadrons of horse on the left, the van and the rear to the right, with the king's gleaming household taking the centre. In such a scenario the bulk of the foot would have to have stood on the right, bills, bows and the ubiquitous Welsh 'knife-men', as all accounts appear to agree that the English foot were barely engaged. The stolid Scottish spearmen who formed below the dip of the Dryfield to march on across the Carse appeared very workaday compared to the great blaze of colour from their chivalric opponents. But they were hardened by long service, purposeful in their files, muted hues of faded gambesons with only the proud banners of their immediate commanders raised aloft, their points a steel tipped forest.

> The Scots directed their course boldly upon the English army, which had been under arms all night, with their horses bitted. They mounted in great alarm, for they were not accustomed to

fight on foot.[3]

Gray echoes the prevailing belief that English morale was low. This may not necessarily be so. True the knights, or a number of them, had been given a bloody nose but that was not a serious tactical defeat and the Scots had shown no prior signs of moving onto the attack. Trokelowe rather opines that the English horse were anxious to be revenged for the previous day's failure:

> Some of the English army, riding out in front of the Scots' formations, challenged them ferociously, but they, resisting manfully, killed many nobles on that Sunday, viz. the Vigil of the Nativity of St John the Baptist. As a result the English were exasperated and firmly resolved to be avenged or be defeated on the following day.[4]

Bruce may have deployed a screen of missile troops, mainly his slender reserve of archers, as skirmishers.[5] This would be a sound move as their shafts would deflect their considerably more numerous opponents from immediately loosing onto the tightly packed files behind. Some English archers certainly replied, with or without orders and there was a burst of outpost bickering as the two sides traded volleys. Lanercost records the outcome:

> On the morrow – an evil, miserable and calamitous day for the English – when both sides had made themselves ready for battle, the English archers were thrown forward before the line, and the Scots archers engaged them, a few being killed on either side: but the king of England's archers quickly put the others to flight.[6]

King Robert had a further surprise in that he intended to deliver his attack with the brigades in echelon, a series of blows rather than one concerted push. This tactic, potentially devastating, required first rate discipline, cohesion and communication; that the manoeuvre could be successfully accomplished under battle conditions speaks volumes for the quality of training Bruce and his highly competent officers had imparted.

Edward Bruce led the Scottish van, his right anchored on the

Bannockburn; to his left rear marched Randolph's men, and Douglas behind. This deployment produced the effect of pushing the English bows to their right, toward the Pelstream. The king's own brigade, the strongest of the quartet now on the field, brought up the rear, marching between Randolph and Douglas. It is unlikely that any observer in the English camp seeing the great strength and resolve of this steady advance could doubt their enemies were anything but earnest; the many professionals present must have grudgingly admired the steadiness of the Scots' brigades.

In the following century, beginning with their struggle against Burgundy, the redoubtable Swiss pikes would become the arbiters of battle on the continent, till gunfire destroyed them at Bicocca in 1522. Their success was due to rigid, almost fanatical discipline, first-class intensive training and sound tactical deployment. A later King of Scots, James IV, would seek to import Swiss tactics to replicate the great victory at Bannockburn, but James was not Bruce, nor were his men veterans. James IV, though he comprehended the theory of Swiss tactics perfectly, blundered over his choice of ground and led his men to disaster. For the spears to succeed, like the Macedonian phalanx before them, they had to retain both impetus and cohesion, loss of either was to court failure.

As James too would discover, the deployment once in motion could not be modified, the pikes were essentially a 'one shot' weapon. Once they were committed the die was very much cast, to recall and reform them nigh on impossible. The supreme commander's role was therefore to plan the attack carefully and select ground that would facilitate the momentum of the attack but would not expose the men any longer than was strictly necessary to the attentions of the enemy's missile troops. Like Bruce, the Swiss favoured attacking in echelon, covering the exposed ground at a steady pace, narrowing the gap between their points and the enemy line as swiftly as the need to maintain mass would permit. A disorderly advance, such as occurred at Flodden, was almost bound to fail, the men losing that vital impetus, the great hammer blow as the massed staves struck the foe like a veritable steamroller.

As the *schiltrons* advanced the tide was still high, filling the Forth, the Bannockburn and the Pelstream, thus enhancing the value of these water obstacles. Bruce, having taken the initiative, needed above all

else to retain it. If he could advance to the mouth of the pocket occupied by the English, compressed in their encampment, he could prevent Edward from maximizing his superior forces over a wider battlefield. If the English were given sufficient ground to deploy as they would intend, their horse in the centre, bows and bills on the flanks, then they would achieve a decisive tactical advantage. Much would now depend upon how fast the English could deploy, if they could break out of the trap that was already forming.

Many in the Scottish ranks would be aware of the risk from archers, some would be survivors of the carnage at Falkirk who could regale their comrades with dire warnings of the clothyard storm; to advance to contact as swiftly as the line of march would allow, offered the best chance to avoid such a lethal deluge. King Edward II still appeared to have doubts; wedded to his romantic version of chivalric warfare, he seemed unable to grasp the fact the Scots were nearly upon him, just a few hundred yards to the west (the distance across the Carse was perhaps half a mile or so from the base of the escarpment).

With the monarch was Sir Ingram Umfraville, who suggested the English should decline contact and fall back behind their own exposed baggage train and allow the disorder of plunder to upset the Scottish plans.[7] There is a suggestion the Scots halted before contact and fell to their knees for a final unction. This gives rise to the tale that Edward exclaimed his enemies knelt to beseech his mercy and Umfraville gave the tart response that though they might kneel it was not the king's forgiveness they sought. Such a version, though tempting in poetic terms cannot be sustained. The Scots had previously seen to the welfare of their souls and the advance could not be stopped once begun, momentum and cohesion together were all.[8]

We may imagine that, as the phalanxes of serried staves marched on, seeming to devour the intervening ground, the English camp would have been the scene for frenzied activity: squires straining with harness; grooms throwing saddles on the mettlesome mounts, fumbling with bards and chanfrons; the air thick with curses and a blur of movement; grindstones sparking as blades were sharpened; sergeants already soaked in sweat bellowing orders; knights and bannerets, stomping and fretting to order by squadrons. It is most likely that many knights in the van were amongst those who had lain

in full harness, wrists looped around the reins of saddled destriers. These would be the first to mount, following the imperative of the trumpets. The Earl of Gloucester was still smarting from the gross injustice of his uncle's conduct the night before.

He and Hereford exchanged fresh broadsides as to which, now, should lead. Hereford was Constable but Gloucester claimed precedence:

> For there was rivalry between him [Gloucester] and the Earl of Hereford who should take precedence in the line and the Earl of Hereford said that this was lawfully his, because he was Constable of England. Gloucester replied that his forbears had always led the van, and therefore this pertained to him by custom …[9]

Battle

In a foul and violent temper, the Earl flung himself, without his blazon, into the saddle and set off at the canter, his *mesnie* knights streaming behind; King Edward would witness who was fainthearted and who was not. This conduct was not due to failing morale and there is clearly substance in the suggestion that the knights charged because they sought both the glory in the day and revenge for the upsets of the previous:

> As for the reason for this disaster, I do not know to what misfortune I can attribute it; unless perhaps because the English advanced rashly and in a more undisciplined manner than was appropriate. For their men were weary and weak from too much haste, debilitated by hunger and lacking sleep's restoration[10]

At least one other chronicler, le Baker, states that the English were over-confident, which he evidences with the assertion that the magnates had brought with them a veritable caravanserai of luxury items:

> they got together to bring with them vessels of gold and silver such as men of rank are used to indulge themselves with in times of peace. Never up to that time nor later has been seen so

> much nobility so nobly equipped nor swelled with such arrogance.[11]

This precipitate rush was rank folly, the worst response to a measured advance of spears. The horse, to be effective without missile troops, would require maximum impact, steamroller to steamroller if they were to beat the *schiltrons*. Throwing tactics to the wind and flinging themselves forward in some Homeric gesture was tantamount to gross negligence. The spears just ate them up. Gloucester could not have fared worse if Bruce had dictated his tactics.

Thundering across the Carse, flinging themselves against the points of Edward Bruce's brigade, the Earl together with Clifford, Sir John Comyn, Sir Edward Mauley and Sir Pain Tiptoft, were unhorsed and slain. The pride of English chivalry fell to Scottish peasantry, their proud destriers impaled on hungry points; tumbled knights were hacked and stabbed, daggers thrust through visors, beneath the arms or into the groin. Gloucester, though worth a hefty ransom, was not spared; without his surcoat he appeared no more than an ordinary knight, a life without cash value did not qualify for clemency.

According to the Life of Edward II, Gloucester attacked Douglas' brigade and actually succeeded in breaking into the mass of spears and was there unhorsed and killed, due, as the chronicler avers, to the faintheartedness of his affinity:

> The earl withstood him [Douglas] manfully once and again penetrated their wedge, and would have been victorious if he had faithful companions. But look! At a sudden rush of the Scots, the earl's horse is killed and the earl rolls to the ground. Lacking defenders and borne down by the weight of his body-armour he could not easily arise, and of the five hundred cavalry whom he had led to battle at his own expense, he almost alone was killed[13]

Such conduct was inexcusable. However Gloucester may have been smarting, his experiences of the day before should clearly have shown that an ill-judged canter onto the spears would achieve nothing but oblivion. Even as they fell, the piled carcasses of men and beasts created a wall of impediment to those who must follow. More English cavalry streamed forth to take on Edward Bruce's brigade. Great

clouds of dust and steam would obscure the struggling mass so that a man, his vision already clouded by the red mist of battle, would struggle to see even that which was directly before him. Lances glanced from spear shafts, keen-edged blades hacked at the points. Some horsemen, frustrated in their attempts to get to grips with the impenetrable hedge, hurled axes, maces, swords and daggers. All to no avail, the line could not be breached and the king's brother had firmly anchored his flank against the Bannockburn, the trap had begun to close.

As the *schiltrons* crashed, one after the other, into the milling mass of English horse, a desperate mêlée ensued. The scene is reminiscent of Marshal Ney's gallant but fruitless charges at Waterloo, great streaming knots of magnificently caparisoned horses, spilling around the schlitrons, as the French would later lap around the British squares. Furious in their impotence the imperious war horses, reared and lunged, the dense hedge of points thrusting at chest and eyes. Stricken animals keening in fright, shied violently aside or, dying, pitched their mailed riders at their enemies' feet, so that daggers and axes could complete their frightful travail. The Lanercost chronicler records the fury of the initial clash:

> Truly, when both armies engaged each other and the great horses of the English charged the pikes of the Scots, as it were into a dense forest, there arose a great and terrible crash of spears broken and of destriers wounded to the death; and so they remained without movement for a while. Now the English in the rear could not reach the Scots because the leading division was in the way, nor could they do anything to help themselves; wherefore there was nothing for it but to take flight.[14]

Despite the frantic gallantry of these attacks, the momentum of the spears was scarcely checked and the three brigades formed up, as though on parade. Together they formed the cork in the bottle, the English were denied further room for tactical manoeuvre, Bruce had decided on the ground and the trap wherein his enemies now found themselves represented everything he could have hoped for. For all this the battle was neither lost nor won, if the gap between the

Bannockburn and Pelstream was, say, 1,200 yards in width, allowing for a yard of ground per spearman and assuming little space between the brigades, the files could not have been more than four or five men deep, by no means an overwhelming mass.[15]

> One slashes, one slays, one warns, one wounds, one is routed, one lurks, one swaggers, one shoves, one groans, one is worsted; one shrieks, one shrinks, one shakes, one shudders, one is roped, one picks, one cloaks, one plucks, one pokes, one is robbed. There is increasing hunger. Bodies and booty are ransacked. Sadly, warriors, women and heirs are affected.
>
> Earl of Clare, admired inspirer of courage, landholder of Gloucester, alas! You die, laid low in the carnage! Thus God becomes avenger. Fierce Clifford, the sword-tip has blunted you, by great blows you are cut down in the thick of the foe. William Marshal, brave knight in the battle lines, Scottish hardness has wounded you to the death. Edmund Mauley, bold in your manliness, you are overwhelmed by ferocious hostile folk. Tibetot, distinguished soldier, like a blazing fire, you are put out by swords and pikes, your death a threat to the standards[16]

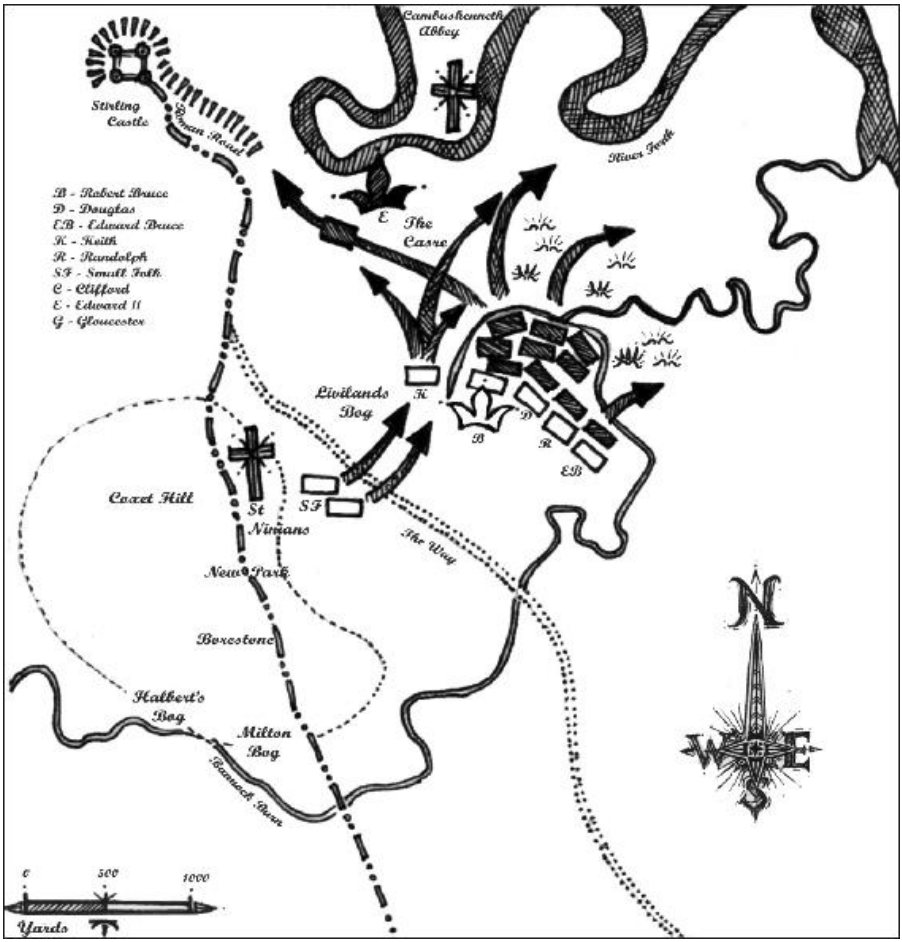
Bruce had not yet committed his own strong brigade, which he wisely kept in hand. The other three, despite the odds able to be ranged against them, were doing rather well, the English horse impotent and sustaining losses. The noise would be tremendous, a crashing symphony of discord that rang across the plain, clear to the mighty ramparts of the castle and beyond, the clarion of a nation's deliverance. Men swore and yelled, emptied their lungs in screams and howls of agony as wounds bit home, the spring grass slippery with entrails and gore, pumping in great arterial gouts from the shrieking bodies of the stricken.

King Edward II, if he was no general, would not be accused of playing the poltroon. Monarch and gilded entourage fought in the front, as more and more cavalry came into play. Numbers were of no advantage, however, for the thicker the press, the less momentum. Those at the front could make to impression against the hedge of spears, those at the back fought each other for space to deploy. The

king, by riding to the fore, showed greater hubris than judgement. His army was effectively leaderless; the lowly foot, including the potentially decisive missile arm, was allotted no role in the struggle.

With the English host careening wildly against the log jam of unyielding spears and the rest packed like sardines behind, some without sufficient space even to free their blades, there was little prospect of the foot becoming engaged. The trap was working, for the king of England's great swell of numbers counted for nothing in the narrows. Some archers did shoot over the heads of the cavalry, hoping their shafts would plunge into the packed masses of spears. This was largely ineffective, the arrows falling beyond the Scottish ranks, with more than the odd shaft striking their mounted comrades in the back, something which did little to endear the despised foot to their chivalric betters. More ominously for Bruce, a commanded body of bowmen was ordered to the right where, splashing across the burn, they took station with the Pelstream on their left flank. This gave them a clear shot at Douglas' brigade which soon found itself in difficulties, the arrows scarcely able to miss their mark in the press.

Wallace's men had been flayed by the arrow storm at Falkirk, the dense packed ranks of spears a perfect target for the men of the grey goose feather, their shafts whistling and biting deep into largely unprotected flesh. For the Scottish foot this was a terrible ordeal, the men could scarcely move within their ranks, as the arrows smacked home. This was the nightmare; Bruce could see the plan of attack unraveling if his men remained exposed, pinned by the horse in front, assailed from the flank. If one brigade gave way, then either the line would fold or the remaining *schiltrons* would become surrounded. Now was the moment for Keith's light horse to advance, to sweep down upon the archers, themselves unsupported, in a classic light cavalry action.



Bannockburn, 24 June 1314.

It was now that the doughty Scottish hobilers cantered over the Carse, their ponies' hooves flinging up clods from the damp earth, lances levelled. The archers, themselves taken in flank, had little time to react, even if they attempted to stand. This was no lumbering mass of feudal chivalry but swift, hard hitting and decisive. The surviving bowmen pelted back across the stream, Douglas was granted deliverance and the line held. The ranks on both sides were packed so tightly that the dead and wounded scarcely had room to fall. Once on the ground an injured man could likely measure his remaining span in seconds. English lances and Scottish spears lunged and parried, bit and thrust, the churned earth soon puddled in gore, spilt blood and entrails drenching the fighters.

Inexorably the Scots began to edge forwards, driving their mounted opponents back, Bruce now sent his own strong reserve in on the left to bolster Douglas, whose men were shaken and thinned by the arrows, Keith's hobilers still patrolling the far bank to deter any repetition. With his own brigade committed, Bruce had no viable reserves remaining; his men must win through or surely perish. None on the English side possessed the authority or the wit to attempt a full flank attack. Strong foot detachments, supported by the horse, could have crossed the Pelstream or, with difficulty, the Bannockburn, and come upon their foes from the flank or rear. Fortunately for the Scots, no such evidence of tactical competence emerged.

'Push, push, push' the Scots commanders urged as the fight continued, neither side having the advantage. For an hour or more the hosts remained locked, the dead and dying carpeting the mire. In the nature of medieval combat it would not be possible for the men to fight continuously for such a length of time. Wielding lance, sword or spear, particularly, as with the English, on an empty belly, is exhausting. It would inevitably be the case that, along the line, the leading files would draw back from time to time, to regain their breath and summon up the energy to continue. The hardy clansmen from Bruce's brigade either filled the gaps left by the arrows amongst Douglas' men or added their formidable brawn to the rear of the other formations, driving their tired comrades forward, akin to the press of a gigantic scrum.

These sons of Clan Donald were seasoned warriors, bearers of a proud lineage, who claimed their descent from Somerled and, through

him, a distant line of Irish heroes. This day they did king and country good service, earning their coveted privilege to always hold the right of the line, the place of honour, a tradition that would be remembered even to that last grim charge over the bloody ground at Culloden. A battle is a finely-tuned affair, morale can fluctuate according to its tempo and, with all his forces now committed, there appeared little more King Robert could do to affect the outcome. This was now a soldier's battle, dependent not upon strategy and grand tactics but upon the grit and stamina of the individual, on the esprit de corps within units. The Scots, pushing forward, sensed a weakening; their archers, skirmishing on the flanks, were finding an abundance of targets; the great wedged mass of English was visibly wavering. With a great collective shout of triumph bursting from their lungs the spears drove forward, sloughing off exhaustion, adrenalin pumping.

> Let the pikeman strike like a snake with a deadly thrust. Let the smooth shafted spear pierce the commanders, spilling blood, causing anguish with lethal missiles! Let the billman with his axe sever leg from trunk, brandish shafts; thus he will overcome if he perseveres. The sword-tip stands forth. No one realizes that in combat nothing helps. Fortune overlooks those destined to have their places filled[17]

Bruce did have a single formation thus far uncommitted and this was the 'small folk', a *Volksturm* of those unfitted for service in the front rank, untrained or with skills more suited to the rear, leavened by the usual horde of varlets, camp followers, artisans and general looters. These now advanced, either by command or, more probably, on their own initiative and could be seen lining the Dryfield slope. Most were armed and flaunted a streaming of (rather *ad hoc*) banners. It is likely that these *bacaudae* were motivated by greed and opportunism, rather than love of country, spoil being the greater incentive.[18]

What appears certain is that this final reinforcement was interpreted by the hard-pressed English as indicating that the Scots still had reserves and that their full strength was not yet committed. Wavering in the ranks had accelerated to a steady trickle from the rear as thoughts of '*sauve qui peut*' sprang uppermost in men's minds. Courage is a collective as well as an individual resource, its sustenance

is the commander's most valuable resource; lack of effective command is more likely than anything else to sap the collective and thus the individual resolve.

The rot always begins at the back, gathers momentum, swells from a bare trickle, to a stream, to a river, then the flood, the bursting of the dam. Once that point is reached then a rally is well nigh impossible. Men who have striven valiantly for hours, kept their faces to the foe and borne their arms with valour will be transformed, upon the fatal instant, into a panic-stricken rabble, casting aside honour and harness, fleeing for their lives like rabbits caught in the headlight's glare.

Rout

Edward II was not thinking in terms of defeat. He fought with manic courage in the thick of the mêlée. His household knight, Sir Roger Northburgh, had been unhorsed and taken, his glitterati bruised, bloodied and thinned. As the steam began to drain from the English effort, saving the royal person from capture assumed priority status. Edward, to his credit, would give no heed but his two paladins, Pembroke and Sir Giles d'Argentan, were mindful of their charge and virtually dragged the king from the press. This retreat, however, could not pass unnoticed, especially as a half a thousand chosen knights formed the royal escort. Even if he had to be removed by force the king's abrupt departure from the field sent a very clear message to his soldiers. The king's party splashed over the Pelstream, brushed Keith's hobilers aside and rode directly for the mighty walls of Stirling.

D'Argentan, having done his duty to the throne, proceeded to discharge his obligation as a knight and rode straight for the Scottish spears, dying on the points of Edward Bruce's men. Gray confirms the quixotic gesture:

> As those who had the king's rein were thus drawing him always forward, one of them, Giles de Argentin, a famous knight who had lately come over the sea from the wars of the Emperor Henry of Luxembourg, said to the king: 'Sire, your rein was committed to me; you are now in safety; there is your castle where your person may be safe. I am not accustomed to fly nor am I going to begin now. I commend you to God!' then

> setting his spurs to his horse he returned to the mêlée, where he was slain.[19]

The king's flight acted as a catalyst to transform fight into rout as though by dire alchemy, the entire English position dissolving into a sudden panic. Hundreds of the fleeing men, exhausted, many injured, weighed down with harness, died in the thrashing waters of the Forth. More drowned or were trampled under in the Pelstream and Bannockburn. The whole of the Carse became a giant butcher's yard, the narrow passage of the Bannockburn before the confluence was choked with dead and dying, men and horses piled in great shuddering, moaning piles. Barbour asserts the 'Bannockburn betwixt the braes of horses and men so charged was that upon drowned horses and men, man might pass dry over it'.[20] The Lanercost chronicler confirms the scale of the disaster:

> This account I heard from a trustworthy person who was an eyewitness. In the leading division were killed the Earl of Gloucester, Sir John Comyn, Sir Pagan de Tiptoft, Sir Edmund de Mauley and many other nobles besides footsoldiers who fell in great numbers. Another calamity which befell the English was that, whereas they had shortly before crossed a great ditch called Bannockburn into which the tide flows and now wanted to recross it in confusion, many nobles and others fell into it with their horses in the crush while others escaped with much difficulty and many were never able to extricate themselves from the ditch.[21]

How many died can only be guessed at, but the casualties on the English side would certainly be numbered in thousands. Over one hundred knights, together with all their harness, horses and baggage, were taken – the triumphant Scots would pick the field clean. Bruce had perhaps lost several hundred. The pursuit cannot, however, have being either long or intense, the exhausted Scottish foot were in no shape to endure further exertion and the paucity of their horse would restrict the scale of slaughter. For the English foot, immured in a hostile land, abandoned by their king, this was apt to be scant consolation.

We may assume that bodies of fleeing men were rallied and

reformed for the long march home. The locals, previously cowed by the majesty of the unbowed host, would be a mite less restrained, prowling the shattered army like jackals, cutting off and cutting up stragglers, hungry for a share of the loot. And loot there was; all of the English king's chattels, the gorgeous baubles of his catamites, the silver and plate of the magnates, all these great riches fell into the hands of the commons. The haul would represent wealth beyond the imaginings of many of those who now rampaged unchecked through the wreck of the proud encampment.

> The knights shed their armour and fled without it; the Scots continually harassed their rear; the pursuit lasted fifty miles. Many of our men perished and many too, were taken prisoner. For the inhabitants of the countryside, who having previously feigned peace, now slaughtered our men indiscriminately wherefore it was proclaimed by Sir Robert Bruce that they should take prisoners and hold them to ransom. So the Scots busied themselves with taking prisoner the magnates in order to extort large sums from them. There were captured the Earl of Hereford, John Giffard, John de Wylyntone, John de Segrave, Maurice de Berkeley, undoubtedly barons of great power …[22]

The Life of Edward II also makes it quite clear that is was the desire to rob the English baggage that distracted many Scots from the less lucrative business of the chase and that many English, who might otherwise have been taken or killed, escaped. The battered survivors mustered at Berwick where numbers would be much depleted. *The Life* asserts that as many as half a thousand of those presumed dead were in fact prisoners and whom, on payment of ransoms, were freed.[23] In assessing the pecuniary loss to the English of the valuables lifted by the victorious Scots, the chronicler puts the figure as high as £200,000: 'So many fine noblemen and valiant youth, so many noble horses, so much military equipment, costly garments and gold plate – all lost in one unfortunate day, one fleeting hour'.[24]

Edward II refused the temptation to seek refuge in Stirling (or perhaps the opportunity was denied to him), but fled south, with his five hundred knights guarding the royal person. He was accompanied

by Hugh Despenser, his current lover, and de Beaumont. This was, in the circumstances, the only viable course of action and Edward, who might be censored for poor leadership, cannot be criticised for taking such swift steps to avoid capture. As serious as the defeat was, the loss of the king would have compounded the disaster tenfold. Moubray bowed to the inevitable and surrendered the castle. *The Life of Edward II*, however, makes it clear the king had no choice but to ride on as the gates to the fortress were bolted against him:

> The king coming to the Castle and thinking to find refuge there, was repulsed as if he were an enemy; the drawbridge was raised and the gate closed. Wherefore the castellan was thought by many to be not innocent of treason, and yet that very day he was seen in armour arrayed as for battle as if to fight for the king. I neither absolve the castellan nor accuse him of treachery, but I think it was God's doing that the King of England did not enter the castle, for if he had then been admitted he would never have escaped capture.[25]

Edward II had embarked upon his first and only major test of generalship and the result was the worst single disaster suffered by English arms in the medieval period, on a par with the French defeat at Courtrai. Indeed the parallels between the two combats are striking, and the fact that the example of the earlier fight should have offered a valuable lesson merely increases the weight of opprobrium.

The English king had seriously under-estimated his enemy, he had failed to make a full tactical evaluation of the ground and consider possibilities beyond the need for an all round defence. He failed to provide leadership and allowed, even encouraged with his scandalous treatment of Gloucester, divisions between his officers. Edward II was simply not fit to command. In contrast, Robert Bruce had displayed fine tactical judgement. On the first day he had fought primarily on the defensive having taken pains to create an impregnable position. As his army was inferior in numbers and deficient in heavy cavalry, this was entirely wise. His army met the challenge of the English horse, proving they were a match for the vaunted chivalry. With their morale thus buoyed, the king, after much weighty consideration, took the momentous decision to commit his forces to offensive action.

By so doing he shaped the destiny of both Scotland and England, he held aloft that torch which Wallace and Murray had lit and dealt the death blow to English hopes of outright domination. The echoes of the patriots' first great charge, from the Abbey Craig against Cressingham's men, sounded in full again that day and the business thus begun, if not ended, was at least guaranteed an ending. Whilst Bannockburn did not end the war, it changed beyond recognition the nature of the conflict. From June 1314 and for nearly two decades the Scottish commanders, particularly Edward Bruce, Douglas and Randolph, would carry on the war in northern England and Ireland, and the dwellers in the English marches would taste the full meaning of defeat; 'Maidens of England, sore may you mourn'.[26]

> Why should I beat about the bush? What can I sing about so vast a slaughter? Tragedy will scarcely answer the purpose to show the wounds left by this stroke. My mind has not skill enough to count the names of the fighters. How many and how awful the blows death has arranged to deal there. Many are mown down, many pierced by spears; many are drowned, many taken alive; many are bound in chains and held for ransom. Because of this some are now enriched and raised up who before had been humble and impoverished. All around are places heaped high with spoils. Words full of menace are shouted and reinforced with actions. I know not what to say. I am reaping a harvest I did not sow.[27]

Chapter 7
A Landscape of War

Richard and Robert began to tax the goods of the said men [of Northumberland] in the seventh year [of Edward II], and they sat at Morpeth in the said county; and suddenly there arrived Stephen Segrave and many others with him and they told them that the lord king was retreating from Stirling with his army and was coming towards England, and on this they were terrified. They fled and, like others of the county, stayed in the enclosed towns and castles and forts. And immediately afterwards, before the 1st August, there came Edward Bruce and Thomas Randolph leading the Scottish army[1]

– *The Lanercost Chronicle*

Harrying the north of England

For the northern English the defeat of the army at Bannockburn was a particular catastrophe. They were now fully exposed to the wrath of the victorious Scots. The battle, exceedingly important as it was, did not end the war. It ended only the period when Bruce felt constrained to rely mainly upon stealth and skirmish. It permitted him and his able captains to pursue a more aggressive strategy, taking the war far beyond the borders of Scotland, to the marches and as far south as Lancashire, into the waters of the North Sea and over the narrow passage to Ireland. From 1314 to the Treaty of Northampton, fourteen years later, the military initiative lay almost entirely with the Scots.

The objective of the subsequent Scottish campaigns was, above all, to wring recognition from Edward II of Bruce's sovereignty. Lesser but still important objectives were the recapture of Berwick and, if possible, of Carlisle, with the cost of the campaigns, as in earlier years, being funded by the cash extorted from the northern English counties. Hardship, famine and waste were to be their lot.

His dismal failure against the Scots was to haunt Edward II in the years that followed. His father had succeeded in diverting the

opposition by glittering triumphs in the field. The spoils of war are mighty persuasive but Edward now had only the reverse, the bitter dregs of defeat. Victory in battle was the yardstick by which medieval kings might expect to be measured and he had spectacularly flunked the test.

Leadership of the opposition now focused on Thomas of Lancaster; Gloucester was dead and Aylmer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, was discredited through his role in the débâcle. In September 1314 the king was obliged to stand by, impotent, as his administration was purged, household officials were sacked and a number of the sheriffs dismissed. The Lincoln Parliament of 1316 confirmed Thomas of Lancaster's role of chief councillor.[2] His appointees were by no means mere partisans. Merit was a clear denominator but halfhearted plans for a further Scottish campaign came to nothing. Edward never left the south and Lancaster proceeded no further north than Newcastle.

The two years from 1316–18 marked a brief flowering of amity between king and earl, their relationship consolidated by the Treaty of Leake. Edward was attempting to create an affinity by advancing certain younger lords such as Hugh Audley, Roger Damory and William Montague. Two of this new coterie of favourites scored handsomely when they were married to a brace of Gloucester's heiresses, thus each securing a slice of the late earl's great fortune.

Lancaster was being increasingly marginalised. He lacked political acuity and at this time was diverted by a private feud with Earl Warenne. The Leake agreement in 1318 provided for an advisory bench of seventeen councillors who were to deliberate all matters not otherwise requiring the assent of Parliament. The new favourites were distanced from the court whilst the earl and others received full pardon for all matters past. Leake was a triumph for the moderate reformers, of whom Pembroke was certainly the most influential. Lancaster certainly did not control the new panel; he had the right only to nominate a single banneret as member.

This entente was destined to be short lived, for amongst the king's new intimates was the younger Despenser, who was to be another Gaveston. Whilst the Gascon had been annoying, the Despensers, father and son, were alarming. Clever, manipulative, ruthless and avaricious, Despenser was to abuse the royal patronage to build up a vast estate. The main area of his ambitions lay in South Wales where

he looked for a greater share of the Gloucester inheritance and his impatient greed brought him swiftly into conflict with the marcher lords, including Clifford, Hereford and Roger Mortimer.[3]

The marchers were not slow to assert their right and in 1321 they drove the upstart Despenser from South Wales by force of arms. Caught off guard, the king was obliged, in August, to agree to his creature's exile. It might seem that Edward had learnt nothing from the Gaveston years but he had come to appreciate the value of patience. His surrender in the summer was a mere device intended to lull his enemies into a false sense of security. Cannily, he had marked the cracks in the opposition and selected as his first target Bartholemew Badlesmere, an individual already renowned for duplicity and cordially detested by Lancaster. The latter would certainly not raise a hand to help, too blinded by his own conceit to realise that the lesser man's downfall presaged his own.[4]

Boroughbridge

After a cunningly manufactured *casus belli*, Badlesmere's castle in Kent was besieged and taken.[5] Having effortlessly sailed over this first hurdle the king then squared up to the marcher lords. Harrying the despised catamite was one thing but their collective nerve failed when confronted by the royal banner. Again Lancaster remained aloof, as though none of this concerned him. His turn was next. Isolated by his own hubris the earl soon found himself confronting a royal army. With the opportunity for concerted action gone, Lancaster had few friends left to call upon. The forces he could muster, however, were still formidable and the two hosts scrimmaged around Burton-on-Trent before the Lancastrians began to retreat north, almost certainly to seek sanctuary in Scotland.

In this they had not reckoned with Andrew de Harcla. Well advised by his own spies and raising a force of marchers from Cumberland and Westmorland, he executed a forced march to cut off the rebel's retreat at Boroughbridge. On 16 March Lancaster and Hereford found the bridge and crossing held against them. The tactics of this relatively-small encounter are extremely interesting, for, as Sir Charles Oman points out

> The first conscious attempt on the English side to use

> dismounted men-at-arms combined with archers may be Andrew Harcla's petty victory over the Lancastrian rebels at Boroughbridge in 1322 when we are told that he dismounted all his cavalry 'in the Scottish fashion' to assist his archers to hold a bridge and a ford.[6]

In terms of scale the action may indeed have been a small one but de Harcla did win a signal victory. Hereford and Clifford assailed the bridge head-on, whilst Lancaster attempted the ford. Both attacks were seen off with loss. Hereford, attempting to instill some fire in his men during the fight on the bridge, was mortally wounded by an ungentlemanly thrust from below; with his demise the heart went out of the Lancastrians. Foiled in their attempt to move north, the earl's army evaporated during the course of the late winter night. The next day it was de Harcla who followed up his advantage and advanced. Lancaster was forced to surrender. His subsequent condemnation and execution came as no surprise.

Edward's triumph was complete. He had isolated and mopped up all of the political opposition: executed with Lancaster at Pontefract were Clifford, Moubray and a score of lesser fry, while perhaps a hundred others were quietly done to death or forced into exile. At York the Ordinances were finally annulled.

The Despensers now came into their own, father and son competing in ruthless rapacity. Both were universally loathed:

> For the brutal and greedy father had in the past wronged many; and promoted the excommunication of many: As a justice of the forest he had accused many from poaching from royal hunting grounds, many of these he vilely disinherited, some he forced into exile, from many he extorted unjust sums of money; and collected a thousand librates of land by means of threats … By a general judgement he justly lost what he had accumulated from the losses of others.[7]

King Robert I might now appear secure in his hold over Scotland (John Baliol had finally died in genteel exile in 1313), but he was aware that without formal recognition by the crown of England his victories could still be reversed. After the defeat at Bannockburn Edward II had spent a fortnight at Newcastle, from where he sought to

call up Henry of Lancaster (the earl's brother) and other magnates to restore his shattered army. He then fell back upon York, where Pembroke was appointed as captain of all royal forces north of the Trent. The earl was given wide powers, but in practical terms there was little he could hope to achieve.

By then the Scottish army was already ranging through the marches virtually at will. Northumberland was wasted as far south as the Tyne and the raiders crossed at Newburn to enter the Palatinate, compelling the terrified citizenry to buy a further truce. In the west, de Harcla was able to organise some resistance and clashed with the Scots at Reycross on or around 4 August.[8] During November he struck back at Dumfries, but these were isolated beacons in a sea of passivity. Already starved by earlier incursions, the Northumbrians had neither the resources nor the will to resist. For many the only remaining option was permanent fight and these murderous, desperate years saw a steady exodus from the upland dales.

Durham, richer, more populous, and further from the wild border, fared marginally better, being able to purchase successive truces. The years after Bannockburn witnessed a dramatic increase in long-distance Scottish raids, the flying columns moving through the northern counties effectively unopposed, extorting cash and ransoms, destroying crops and lifting livestock. Nothing was beneath the raiders' consideration – books, vestments, bed linen, pots and pans; iron, always scarce in Scotland, was much prized.[9] In tandem with this policy of extended *chevauchées* was the pressure exerted on the two key bastions of Berwick and Carlisle, plus the additional gambit of Edward Bruce's campaigns in Ireland.

A raid which extended as far south as Furness in Lancashire in 1316 was counted as a great success because it yielded a substantial haul of the precious iron. The policy of deliberate and thorough destruction, was so completely pursued that in addition to burning crops and cutting down fruit trees even the rabbit warrens at Bamburgh were systematically dug up.[10] On the march the army might be split into several columns. Randolph and Douglas were King Robert's most indefatigable captains. Fortified places were generally avoided, as was any general engagement; this was war fought for politics and economy, not for glory. The Hainault chronicler, Jean le Bel, has left a vivid description of the Scots as they appeared in the

field, dating from the time of the Weardale campaign of 1327:

> one and all are on horseback, except for the camp followers (‘*le ribaudaille*’) who are on foot, that is to say the knights and squires are mounted on great rouncies, and the other folk of the country are all on little hackneys. And they do not bring wheeled vehicles, because of the various mountains through which they pass in this country.[11]

It was obvious that after the fall of Stirling, Berwick would be the Scots’ next major objective and in anticipation of an attack the town’s defences were overhauled in both July and December 1314. The walls and wooden palisades were pointed and repaired, timber outworks including a barbican were added, the whole entailing an expenditure of some £270.[12] The mood of the garrison was fragile, verging on paranoia.[13] Conditions were exacerbated by poor harvests and deteriorating weather, the spectre of famine adding to the townspeople’s fears.

As Bruce had earlier threatened, all those who had held cross-border estates lost their lands (this included Bruce himself who had forfeited manors in Cleveland). The Umfravilles were now no longer earls of Angus or Baliols’ lords of Galloway; Dirleton, previously held by the Vaux family from Gilsland, was also sequestered. The Umfravilles were lords of Redesdale and proved energetic in its defence, but the neighbouring upland valley of Tynedale, an ancient liberty, administered by the king of England since 1296, had previously been enfeoffed to the Scottish crown and, faced with the pressure of constant inroads, the inhabitants now tended to revert:

> At this time the people of North Tynedale, deserting the king of England and his faith, gave themselves up completely to the king of Scotland. They treated their neighbours the Northumbrians inhumanely, carrying off their goods and taking them away as captives. The women too went riding in warlike manner, stealing the goods which their men did not care about, such as shorn wool and linen, and carried them off[14]

The creation of a brand of professional marchers, skilled in and dedicated to war, charged with local defence, did not always bode

well for the inhabitants. The folk of Bamburgh complained that, having purchased an expensive truce from the Scots under Randolph, they found the castellan demanding an equal fee, plus he was happy to charge them for storage of their goods within the castle walls![15]

The Earl of Hereford was the Scots' most valuable prize at Bannockburn, one of the greatest English magnates and the king's brother-in-law. His release was negotiated in exchange for the ladies of Bruce's family along with Bishop Wishart and Donald, Earl of Mar.[16] King Robert also courteously returned the royal seal which had been overlooked in the rout. Bruce now held a parliament at Cambuskenneth where the lands of those who had fallen in arms against the crown were escheated. Others who were willing to submit, including Patrick Dunbar, the Earl of March and Ingram Umfraville, were permitted to swear the oath of allegiance.

John Comyn, Earl of Buchan, the king's inveterate foe, had died in 1308 with no male issue. One of his co-heiresses had married Henry Beaumont who thus gained a claim to the earldom, even though the lands were sequestered by the crown. Beaumont and others who were similarly deprived, the 'disinherited', would return to haunt the kingdom in the years after King Robert's death. Death was a subject much on the king's mind during the early months of 1315. Apart from his daughter Marjorie, now married to the Steward, the king had no legitimate heir.[17] For a monarch whose throne had been so precarious since 1306 and who was still at war with England, the lack of a male heir was a matter of the utmost gravity. The council which met in April to consider the situation determined that Edward Bruce would be heir apparent, the throne entailed in his favour until a male heir was born. Should he predecease and a minor be left as king on Robert's death (as proved to be the case), then Randolph should stand as Guardian.

In January 1315 the dearly-bought truce the citizens of Durham had negotiated was due for expiry. John de Eure was the king's lieutenant north of the Trent and it may have been he who facilitated crisis talks at York, where the leading clergy and magnates met to consider the defence of the northern frontier. The delegates resolved upon the appointment of four northern lords as captains of the marches with power to raise local forces. An appeal for assistance was dispatched to King Edward but met with no effective response. It was

suggested that the locally-raised militias could be funded by a form of local tax – this in an area already denuded of wealth by the Scottish inroads. Whilst the debate continued, the Scots harried the length of Tynedale, almost to the gates of Newcastle. In June it was the turn of the Palatinate:

> In the year [1312] Sir Robert Bruce came into the Bishopric of Durham with a great army and so secretly had he come that he found people sleeping soundly in their beds. He sent Sir James Douglas to the district of Hartlepool with many armed men while he himself remained in the vill of Chester[-le-Street]. Sir James despoiled the said town and he lead back as captives many burgesses and many women. Having collected much booty from the whole countryside they all returned to their own country[18]

Hartlepool was most likely targeted because it was a handy naval base for operations against Scottish privateers and perhaps because the residents had refused to recognise Bruce as their lord, the manor having previously been in his ownership. In spite of the thoroughness with which Durham was 'taken up', this raid was a mere diversion. Carlisle remained the prime objective. As a response to the attack on Durham, Pembroke was, on 5 July, appointed to command the northern shires and, together with Bartholemew Badlesmere, began to concentrate a contract army at York. By this time the Scots were before the beleaguered walls of Carlisle, though confounded by the spirited defence of de Harcla and the inhabitants.

By the time Pembroke was approaching the city the Scots had withdrawn and the earl joined with the castellan in the pursuit. By 21 August Pembroke was back in Newcastle and planning a raid into the Merse, though he advanced no further than Berwick. In due course he was succeeded by Henry Beaumont.

In the late summer King Edward was making what appeared to have been genuine efforts to base himself in the north for a major 'push' against the Scots in the autumn, acting on the advice of his most seasoned councillors, magnates of the calibre of Warenne and Hereford. These good intentions foundered on the grim realities of the king's previous failures and his lack of resources (Pembroke's contract

army had consumed most of the parliamentary subsidies), the weakened state of the northern shires exacerbated by the effects of famine.

Edward Bruce in Ireland

The Irish intervention, which began in May 1315 and ended with the death of Edward Bruce in October 1318, eased the pressure on northern England. For the Scots it was a major logistical exercise to fight on two fronts simultaneously and the periods of intense activity oven the Irish Sea afforded corresponding relief to the marchers. Barbour's account presents the decision to open the new front thus:

> The Earl of Carrick, Sir Edward
> Who was braver than a leopard
> Thought that Scotland was too small
> For himself and his brother both
> And therefore to one and all announced
> That he of Ireland would be king.[19]

The presence of Edward Bruce in Ireland was 'to leave its mark on the country for generations'.[20] The bitter and destructive campaigns waged by the Scots ultimately achieved nothing other than to pile more death and destruction on a land already ravaged by famine and feud. The objectives of this intervention may have comprised the following: the opening up of a second front in the Irish Sea would put further pressure on the English and could result in the western seaboard becoming a Scottish 'lake'; Carlisle, that vital fortress, the gateway to the west, could be dramatically weakened and isolated if its supply route from Ireland was severed.

John of Argyll took Man in February 1315 and the suspicion that a major attack from Ireland might be launched that summer could imply the descent upon Ireland was, at least in part, a pre-emptive strike. The Scots' capability was bolstered by a substantial arms shipment from Flanders which docked on 18th February. More cynically, Edward Bruce would be removed from affairs in Scotland, his volatile personality could be channelled into the Irish adventure, thus reducing the risk of civil strife at home. The chronicler Fordun makes some telling observations on the character and temperament of the king's younger sibling:

> The cause of this [Irish] war was this. Edward was a very mettlesome and high spirited man, and would not dwell together with his brother in peace unless he had half the kingdom for himself; and for this reason war was stirred up in Ireland.[21]

There is also the romantic idea of Bruce's appeal to notions of pan-Celtic brotherhood, a rising of the Gael against the tyranny of the Anglo-Saxon. Whilst such an approach might have a propagandist value, it was scarcely sustainable. Bruce, like most Scottish magnates, was Anglo-Norman, the Red Earl was his father-in-law. Nonetheless, the king was supported by the clans of the northwest and the manifesto he issued makes a strong claim to a common cause with the native Irish:

> Since each Christian man is obliged to assist his neighbour in every difficulty, so also should those who proceed from a common root, who share the same race, ancestors, and country of origin. On that account we have now and for a long time been overwhelmed by sympathy with you in your servitude and oppression. Affronted by the vexations of the English, we are bound to attend to your plight, and with the help of the Most High, to expel from the borders of your land with all force the unnatural and barbaric servitude imposed by the English, so that, as from earliest times, the Albanic and British people having expelled their enemies, should become one in perpetuity.[22]

Edward Bruce could command a force of 5,000—6,000 picked veterans, a formidable instrument of war. The expedition was ferried in a fleet of swift Hebridean galleys and undoubtedly included a number of *galloglas* (Norse-Gael mercenaries) from the Isles.[23] Randolph, John Soules and Philip Moubray all accompanied the army, whose first objective was mighty Carrick-fergus castle, under siege by 22 July.

About the same time as Bruce was investing Carlisle, Domnall O'Neill, the king of Tyrone, offered Edward Bruce the vacant title of High King. The Scots failed before the walls of Carlisle and made little initial headway against Carrickfergus, which resisted stoutly. Their

lack of expertise in siege warfare was a major handicap and one which went some way to seriously offset their prowess in the field. The first Anglo-Irish army sent against him, drawn mainly from Connacht, was cleverly confounded when Bruce nimbly played off some of the various contending factions. These divisions were to plague the native Irish for years to come but the Red Earl, leading the Anglo-Irish, was scattered at Connor in Antrim.

Bruce then marched south to defeat Roger Mortimer in battle at Kells in Meath. Whenever the armies marched, wholesale despoliation followed:

> Theft, famine and destruction of men occurred throughout Ireland for the space of three years and a half; and people used actually to eat one another throughout Ireland.[24]

In 1316 the Scots-Irish secured another victory near Athy in Kildare and, at Dundalk, Edward was enthroned as High King. To consolidate his brother's successes, King Robert brought a second force over early the next year, mainly comprising more *galloglas* from the Western Isles. By 1317 the brothers' army was able to make a demonstration against Dublin, the seat of English lordship, marching as far south as Limerick before retreating north.

Such raids not only spread devastation through a starving and divided land but sowed a whole plague of local feuds in their wake. The O'Donnells beat up Sligo whilst the O'Moores, O'Tooles, O'Byrnes and O'Hanlons fought it out in Leinster. In southern Ulster the local warlord, Felim O'Connor, king of Connacht, turned against the Anglo-Normans but was crushed by William de Burgh and Richard de Bermingham at Athenry in August 1316.[25]

By 1318 Edward Bruce's campaign was rapidly running out of steam, the land exhausted by the ceaseless strife and wholesale destruction that followed the Scots-Irish like a pestilence. With perhaps no more than 2,000 men supported by the de Lacys, enemies of Roger Mortimer, Bruce again marched south. Richard de Clare, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, confronted him with a vastly superior force at Faughart, just north of Dundalk. Though his captains urged caution in the face of such odds Bruce would not countenance withdrawal. Like a punch-drunk fighter who doesn't see it's time to

quit the ring, Bruce attacked. The Scots fought hard and well but the end was never really in doubt and Edward Bruce fell amongst the wreck of his army.

Berwick-upon-Tweed was the other crucible of war. The Scots had established an effective naval blockade which sealed off the harbour. With the port out of action, supplies had to be diverted to Newcastle and then carried overland. In the cold January of 1316 the Scots mounted a night attack, which, thanks to the fitful moonlight, was detected and the raiders seen off. On 14 February the Gascon knight, Raymond de Caillen, led a sortie, contrary to the express orders of Maurice Berkeley, the castellan. The raiders were intercepted by the indefatigable Douglas at Skaithmuir near Coldstream and a sharp action ensued. The enthusiastic de Caillen fell by Douglas' hand; a score of men-at-arms and three times as many foot were also killed. A second commanded party under Robert Neville who sallied out to relieve the first were also cut up and Neville, too, was slain.[26]

For the demoralised garrison the situation soon became critical. Relationships with the townspeople were strained to breaking point, desertion was rife and starvation imminent. A truce of sorts was negotiated to hold until Whitsun, but the Scots would not relinquish the pressure on the beleaguered town. With the concord between King Edward and the Earl of Lancaster now enjoying its brief flowering, plans were made for a full feudal muster, the numbers available to be augmented by a demand on the vills that each should supply and victual one soldier for a period of sixty days. These plans were frustrated by an outbreak of fresh disturbances in Wales.

In June, King Robert mustered his own forces around Duns. On the twenty-fourth day of that month the Scots struck through the wasted manors of Tynedale and down into Durham. The gentry of North Yorkshire, sheltering behind Richmond's formidable ramparts, were quick to buy a truce, so the raiders moved westward by Swaledale to Furness, where they lifted a quantity of iron. Any effective riposte was frustrated by the unhelpful row which erupted between King Edward and Thomas of Lancaster. The latter retired to his own stronghold at Pontefract, leaving the king to salvage what he could from any hopes of a campaign. A muster was planned at Newcastle for 6 October but fresh discord broke out over a disputed succession when the Prince Bishop died. Henry Beaumont was pushing for his own brother Louis

to follow the late Bishop Kellawe; so bitter was the wrangling that the matter was decided only by papal intervention.

Increasing the pressure

The autumn campaign therefore never took place. Instead truce negotiations were entered into. By now King Robert, together with Randolph, was enmeshed in his brother's Irish adventure, leaving Douglas and the steward as guardians of the realm. With Scottish attentions thus divided it was possible to negotiate a ceasefire to hold until the following summer. Over the winter, matters in the north were left in the hands of the Earl of Arundel who was able to supplement the garrison outposts with a mobile field force raised under contract and including nearly 500 hobilers.[27]

Arundel proposed to keep his men's ardour sharp with a series of punitive raids, the first of which was aimed at beating up the area of Jedwood Forest. The raiders crossed over the high neck of Carter Bar. So thorough were the preparations that Douglas, in residence at his manor of Lintilee, was initially caught off guard. Never one to shirk a fight, Douglas mustered such men as he had available and struck at the English van under Thomas de Richmond, killing the knight and besting his men. Returning to Lintilee the Guardian discovered a company of English foragers making free at his table. These unbidden guests were soon dealt with and Arundel, perturbed by his losses, withdrew.

Undeterred by this reverse the resilient earl next planned a naval expedition against Fife. A squadron of five ships sailed from the Humber carrying men-at-arms who, on making landfall on the banks of the Forth, frightened off a local militia led by the sheriff, then proceeded to loot and burn at will. The timorous official, in full flight, ran into a commanded party led by the Bishop of Dunkeld. The prelate was made of much sterner stuff and turned the locals around to join in his attack. The English were again seen off with loss.

Events outside the British Isles now began to have an increasing influence, for in that year Pope John XXII was elected with a manifesto for a new crusade. Brokering a peace between England and Scotland was therefore very much on his agenda. He was prepared to exert pressure on Edward but also renewed Bruce's excommunication.

This was no trivial matter. King Robert was a pious man in an age

of religion – to be cut off from the body of Christ was an anathema and something he would naturally strive to overcome. In practical terms, however, the king was not to be diverted from his objective of taking Berwick. A lasting truce would render this unattainable and he therefore resorted to prevarication.

In the summer a brace of cardinals arrived in England. In the autumn they journeyed north, their diplomatic mission coinciding with the proposed consecration of Louis Beaumont, now secure in his appointment. The combined party comprising the two papal envoys and both Beaumont and his brother were kidnapped by the piratical Gilbert de Middleton.[28] This incident may be viewed as a simple act of brigandage, exemplifying the breakdown of law and order in the north. Alternatively, subsequent writers have been tempted to see Lancaster's hand in the affair (he opposed the appointment of Louis Beaumont), and possibly also that of Robert Bruce, he being anxious to keep the cardinals from meddling in Scotland. The Bishop-elect and his brother were released in October. Middleton soon faced the gallows for his crimes, though he kept silent as to any encouragement he might have had in the affair.

If Bruce had somehow intended to frustrate the cardinals' mission then he was largely successful; when members of their entourage did finally locate the king of Scotland they would not address him as such. Bruce, as ever, was courteous but insistent: he would have his rank acknowledged. As for their suggestions of mediation he vacillated, intimating that the matter would have to be debated before a full council, which might not be expected to assemble before Michaelmas (29 September). The king was determined to bring Berwick under his sway before listening to terms. Again, however, the Scots could make no impression on the walls and by the end of November the siege had been abandoned.

The terms of the papal truce were pronounced by the cardinals in London; a public announcement in Scotland proved more problematic. The friar who was dispatched to complete the task had a difficult journey, being denied safe conduct and robbed. The cardinals had no option but to reiterate the sentence of excommunication against the king and place the realm under an interdict. Dire as this was, the state of English politics denied Edward any opportunity to exploit the papal ban. Relations with Lancaster had sunk to a new low and the constant

wrangling between the king and the greatest of his magnates undermined plans for a campaign. Just how close the earl had become to the Scots at this point is open to question; clearly the divide was immensely beneficial to Bruce.

As the king sought to arrange a muster at York for early September, Lancaster mustered his own retainers at Pontefract and even went so far as to break down the bridges leading northward from the city. For all his belligerence, the earl lacked the stomach for a full-scale rebellion and the papal envoys were able to negotiate the bones of an accord.

If Edward had hoped that pressure from the Curia would compel Bruce to the negotiating table then he had, not for the first time, gravely underestimated his opponent. King Robert would have Berwick. In 1317 the defence of the town had been entrusted to the burgesses, largely as a cost-cutting exercise and one which might effect a reduction in the tensions between the garrison and the civil populace. By the spring of 1318, Wark, Harbottle and Berwick were all under siege. On 2 April Douglas led a surprise attack on Berwick's town walls by the Cow Port. It is said the Scots were assisted by one of the citizens, Peter or Sym of Spalding, who was a relation of the steward, and it was he who facilitated the escalade.[29] The Scots gained the walls and a fierce fight ensued as members of the garrison contested the ramparts and narrow streets.

At length, the survivors were bottled up in the castle, commanded by Roger Horsley, which continued to hold out until 11 June when finally compelled by hunger to capitulate. By that time both Wark and Harbottle had also surrendered. As might be expected, the English traders in Berwick were subjected to robbery, abuse and summary ejection from the town, though there was no wholesale slaughter. From now on Bruce tended to allow offensive operations to be conducted by his captains Randolph and Douglas: both were formidable and vastly experienced. By distancing himself from a direct involvement in raids the king could deflect papal criticism and blame attacks on over-zealous subordinates. He did not, however, distance himself from Berwick.

The capture of the town and castle was a major coup, marking as it did a return to the status quo of 1296. It provided the Scots with a major and secure base on the border, a vital seaport and a further

boost to soaring morale. In the early months of 1319 the king was active in supervising the strengthening of the defences whilst also organising a spoiling raid against the partially finished works at Dunstanburgh. If the loss of the Tweed frontier were not sufficient, Mitford was sold out to the Scots by a traitor. With their rear now secure, Randolph and Douglas launched a great *chevauchée* down the east coast, sweeping through Northumberland and west Durham as far as Barnard Castle and the Tees. It is possible that this destructive sweep through Durham was intended to instruct the new Bishop, Louis Beaumont, in the wisdom of buying truces.

Beaumont was of a more aggressive temperament than his predecessor and the Scots perhaps reckoned that a mite more terror was required.[30] The raiders then made for Ripon by way of Richmond, a commanded party 'took up' Wensleydale before meting out similar treatment to Hartlepool. Both columns then marched south, converging on Knaresborough. It is unlikely that the town was selected at random. The garrison had, in the wake of Middleton's rising, turned against the king and royal forces laid siege to the place from October 1317 to the following January. It is highly probable that the Scots might have expected a 'friendly' garrison. In this they would have been disappointed, but the town was thoroughly taken up and razed before the Scots marched westward to cross the Pennines via Airedale, Ribblesdale and Wharfedale prior to turning north, replete with loot.

It was the fall of Berwick which drove Edward to seek a further accommodation with Lancaster and which then led directly to the accord of Leake. Harvests had improved and the loss, desperate as this might be, was compensated in part by the news of Edward Bruce's defeat and death in Ireland and the recapture of Carrickfergus Castle. In 1319, therefore, the king determined on a major campaign to recover Berwick. A muster of 24,296 foot was proposed, though barely a third of this ambitious total actually served.[31] Lancaster contributed half a thousand and Edward was able to call upon perhaps 1,400 horse, victualled by a fleet of seventy-seven ships. Harcla's marchers were employed to hold the remaining border garrisons. The recapture of Berwick would obviously help to restore local morale, it would re-establish the defensive line on the Tweed and perhaps draw the Scots out to fight.

Once the walls were invested and the engines in place, an amphibious assault was launched under the cover of an artillery bombardment, but King Robert's refurbished defences stood the test. The number of engines was increased to boost the effect of the artillery and fresh attacks launched. There was desperate and sustained fighting along the landward flank of the walls and the outworks changed hands several times, but still the defences held.

Mytton and Byland

Bruce, as ever, was too canny to accept the lure of a general engagement, regardless of the scope of the threat to Berwick. His strategy was to unleash the hounds down the eastern flank, Douglas and Randolph driving as far south as Yorkshire. It has been suggested that they might have hoped to kidnap Edward's queen, then inside York. This is not necessarily fanciful, with the 'She Wolf' as hostage Bruce would possess a valuable trump.[32]

It was said that a spy in York betrayed the plan to Archbishop Melton and also offered to reveal the location of the Scottish camp. The queen was packed off to safety in Nottingham and the archbishop, perhaps recalling the glorious episode of the Battle of the Standard at Northallerton in 1138, prepared to lead local forces against the raiders. As the majority of able-bodied men liable to muster had already marched to the siege of Berwick, Melton pulled together a scratch force of what remained. This motley assembly advanced upon the Scots, who were encamped at Mytton some three miles east of Boroughbridge on the banks of the Swale, near its confluence with the Ouse.

It is highly unlikely the Scots could be taken by surprise and they deployed in *schiltron* formation, setting fire to nearby haystacks to confuse the attackers. As the archbishop's force stumbled forward the raiders bellowed out their fearsome war cries and tramped towards them. It was enough: the citizens bolted, allowing the Scots to mount up for the pursuit. The 'Chapter of Myton', so called because so many ecclesiastics fell in the rout, was a complete disaster. The mayor of York was amongst the dead and many prisoners were taken, several of them members of the Royal Household, including the notary Andrew Tang.[33]

Having decimated the archbishop's rag-tag army, the Scots

advanced to Castleford before, in their by-now-habitual manner, swinging westward through Airedale and Wharfedale. The raiders seem to have split into two marching columns and entered Lancashire by differing routes, some moving through Lonsdale, others along the Greta Valley. At 'Gratirhals' this second party was ambushed:

> In returning homewards through western parts of England, they were set upon by a throng of Englishmen at Gratirhals, a very narrow pass.[34] But the Scots prevailed and the English were scattered, and many were killed, including Sir Henry Fitzhugh, and they returned with great rejoicing to their own country taking many knights and squires with them.[35]

News of the disaster at Myton brought confusion to the siege lines around Berwick. The southern barons were all for ignoring the defeat and maintaining the pressure, the northerners favoured abandoning the siege, fearful of further Scottish inroads. Lancaster decided the day by withdrawing, which effectively brought the leaguer to an end. The English had barely been ten days before the walls, from 8–18 September. The earl's indecent haste to abandon the siege lines inevitably raised fresh doubts as to his loyalties. The king withdrew the remainder of his forces to York to consider how best to protect the marches. Whilst these deliberations continued, Randolph and Douglas struck again.

On All Saints Day (1 November) the Scots crossed into the middle march over Gilsland Waste. In a dozen days of mayhem they penetrated as far south as Brough on Stainmore, garnering a haul of beasts and ransoms as they 'took up' Cumberland on the return journey. Despite their string of successes and the retention of Berwick, the Scots were as much in need of a respite as were the battered English. Edward had exhausted his treasury with nothing but fresh humiliations to show and Bruce, having secured Berwick, needed time to mend his relations with the papacy. On 12 October safe conducts were issued to a dozen Scottish negotiators to attend at Newcastle where, on 22 December, the terms of a two-year cessation were agreed.

Not unsurprisingly in the circumstance, the terms favoured the Scots. Harbottle was returned but only on condition that the defences

would be slighted and custody given back to the Scots if a permanent peace could not be agreed on the expiry of the current truce.

Negotiations with Rome were more difficult. The king's failure to recognise the papal truce was viewed as a most serious dereliction. Bruce and his bishops were summoned to the Curia to explain themselves. They did not attend but letters were sent by the king, the leading clergy and the nobility. The submission offered by the magnates contained a precise summary of reasons why the Scots should be free of English rule. It was clear, concise, yet heavy with heartfelt emotion. It became known as the Declaration of Arbroath and the simple grandeur of the language has rung down through the ages:

> For so long as a hundred of us remain alive, we will never in any way be bowed beneath the yoke of English domination; for it is not for glory, riches or honour that we fight, but for freedom alone, that which no man of worth yields up, save with his life.[36]

The passionate eloquence of this correspondence produced the desired effect. His Holiness was minded to refrain from further interdict against the Scots and urge both sides towards mediation. Notwithstanding the spirit of unity underlying the Declaration of Arbroath, within a few months of its submission a handful of the signatories were plotting King Robert's downfall. These were William Soules, Edward Moubray, David Brechin, Patrick Graham and Eustace Maxwell. Bruce was to be supplanted by Edward Baliol, the son of the disgraced and now forgotten 'Toom Tabard'.

After the death of Edward Bruce the king had drawn up a fresh entail or 'tailzie' in favour of his son-in-law, the Steward, but without a male heir he remained vulnerable. At the 'Black' Parliament held at Scone in August 1320, the conspirators were exposed. Several of the ringleaders suffered the full ghastly fate of the traitor, being hanged, drawn and quartered, a barbarity rarely practised in Scotland. Maxwell was cleared of complicity but Soules and his aunt, who was also implicated, received a sentence of life imprisonment. Moubray had already died, but in a grotesque parody his corpse was disinterred and condemned. Ingram Umfraville was tainted with suspicion but

wisely absented himself from the realm; he never returned.

The truce, which held from November 1319 until January 1322, served the interests of both sides. It empowered Bruce to rebuild his forces after the losses sustained in Ireland whilst it also permitted Edward II to deal with the baronial opposition. Negotiations were conducted at Bamburgh. John of Brittany appeared for the English side as Pembroke was detained in France. He had the support of Bartholemew Badlesmere and the bishops of Worcester and Carlisle. William Soules, as yet free of the stain of treachery, and Alexander Seton deputised for Bruce. The debate ranged over the historic issues, the English harking back to Baliol's homage. Nothing was finalised, though there was the suggestion of an extended truce to endure for twenty-six years.

When matters with Lancaster 'hotted up' in the early part of 1322 the Scots struck, almost certainly in support of the rebels. It is alleged that treasonable correspondence confirming the collusion was discovered on Hereford's corpse after the fight at Boroughbridge, though there has to be a question of whether this was genuine.[37]

Through the second half of January, Durham was savagely raided to the extent that the episode earned the epithet of 'the Burning of the Bishopric'.[38] It may be that this was intended to proclaim Scots' support for the rebels whilst chastising Louis Beaumont for his defiance. Whilst Bruce ravaged the area of south Durham around Darlington, Douglas paid another visit to Hartlepool and the Steward terrorised Richmondshire. In order to march against Lancaster, Harcla had been constrained to negotiate a local truce in the west. Having won the battle against the rebels, he met Edward II at Gloucester with a request that the king take action on the marches. Edward advised that this would not be feasible until after Michaelmas, though Harcla was greeted with the title of Earl of Carlisle in recognition of his good service against the late rebels.

A muster at Newcastle was proposed for 13 June, but soon deferred until 24 July. The numbers the king intended to raise were, at least on paper, impressive.[39] Recruits were drawn from east and west, from Wales and Ireland. The largest contingent was to assemble at Newcastle, with a lesser muster at Carlisle and substantial detachments from Ulster. This was to be a conventional campaign of heavy and light horse with a host of foot and archers, victualled at

least in part by the fleet. Edward had not learnt the lessons of hobiler warfare. The Scots would be bound to adopt Fabian tactics, wasting the land before the invaders and avoiding battle, the great host made vulnerable by the sheer weight of its logistical 'tail'.

With the lighter and infinitely more mobile forces under his command Bruce struck first, crossing into the English west march in mid-June, the raiders adopting their customary two-column formation, the first led by the king in person, the other by the well-tried partnership of Randolph and Douglas:

> Robert de Brus invaded England with an army by way of Carlisle in the week before the Nativity of St John the Baptist [around 17 June] and burnt the bishop's manor at Rose, and Allerdale and plundered the monastery of Holm Cultram, notwithstanding that his father's body was buried there; and thence proceeded to lay waste and plunder Copeland, and so on beyond the sands of Duddon to Furness[40]

Lancaster was razed by the king's column. When the second detachment came up the army went on to destroy Preston before retracing their route back to Scotland.[41] By 24 July the raiders were safe home, unmolested by any relief, despite having enjoyed a leisurely spate of ravaging around Carlisle. It was not until 12 August that Edward's host marched into the Merse. By the nineteenth Musselburgh had been left in flames but the army was already beset by supply problems. The previous year's harvest had been insufficient and extra supplies of grain had to be imported by sea from Gascony, the lumbering, fat-bellied cogs at the mercy of Scots and Flemish privateers.

Two days later the English marched into Leith. Still the Scots would not commit to battle, but hunger, demoralisation and dysentery thinned the ranks just as effectively. A commanded party which descended on Melrose was intercepted and seen off by Douglas and, by 2 September, the English army was withdrawn south of the border. All in all, the campaign had been a very expensive fiasco.

The army was a hugely expensive beast to feed and maintain. Edward, having spent all available monies, had no choice but to disband his forces, retaining only the knights of the Household,

including the younger Despenser. The king found time to vent his frustrations on the castellans of the major east march holds – Bamburgh, Warkworth, Alnwick, and Dunstanburgh – lambasting each for the poor state of their works and the inertia of the garrisons. Scapegoating the individual officers was a shoddy attempt to shift the blame for the parlous state of the region's defences. Conventional garrisons behind castle walls were no answer to hobiler warfare; the whole thrust of Bruce's strategy was to avoid attacking fixed defensive positions.

Even Louis Beaumont, the Bishop of Durham, did not escape censure, being rebuked for neglecting Norham. The Prince Bishop's northerly bastion was, in the event, soon put to the test for, by 17 September, the Scots appeared before the walls.[42] This was, however, nothing more than a feint intended, in all probability, to draw such royal forces as the king commanded into north Northumberland. The main blow fell, once again, in the west. On 30 September Bruce led his army back over the Solway at Bowness and the Scots spent a further five days ravaging the lands around Carlisle, presumably accounting for what little they'd missed in July.

The redoubtable Harcla was, unusually, caught off guard; he had disbanded his western army and the speed of the Scots' attack left him no opportunity for regrouping. He was obliged to retire into Lancashire and seek fresh recruits there. In the event, however, the west was to be spared. King Robert's objective was not mere plunder but to capture the person of Edward II. This was a bold plan for sure, but one which was both carefully conceived and cunningly executed. The Scots now reversed their habitual pattern and came on eastwards over the Pennines. The clearly-excellent spy network which Bruce maintained had informed him of the English king's whereabouts and the paucity of forces under his command.

Edward II was heading south from Barnard Castle when, on 2 October, he learnt of this fresh incursion. Orders were immediately sent to Harcla and numerous other northern magnates to join a muster of North Yorkshire levies at a moorland location known as 'Blakehoumoon', near Byland. The rather optimistic intention was that the barons would raise a conscription of all able-bodied males between sixteen and sixty. The king was much angered when Harcla failed to appear. Whether this was due to intentional tardiness or, as

was quite likely, the difficulties the earl experienced in recruiting, he did, however, succeed in finding recruits in Lancashire:

> This he did, having taken command of the county of Lancaster so that he had 30,000 men ready for battle; and since the Scots were in the eastern march, he brought his forces by western parts to reach the king.[43]

Whilst he waited for the magnates to come in, the king established his headquarters at Byland Abbey where, on 12 October, he received the unwelcome news that the Scots were across the Pennines. In the immediate vicinity he had only Pembroke, Richmond (John of Brittany) and John de Birmingham with their retinues. The royal forces fell back towards Rievaulx with a view to mustering on Blakehoumoon. Randolph's division was already at Northallerton and Edward faced the very real prospect of being caught between the earl and King Robert who was marching to cut off his retreat.

Blakehoumoon has been identified as Scawton Moor, an area of high ground overlooking Sutton Bank and Roulston Scar.[44] Edward sent a most urgent summons to Pembroke, Richmond and Beaumont 'to attend with all possible power'.[45] Randolph was by now barely fifteen miles distant at Malton, whilst Bruce's brigade was storming through the Vale of York. The English, completely out-generalled, took up the best position they could along the summit of the ridge. The ground favoured the defenders in that the direct access to the higher ground was through a narrow approach.

Randolph and Douglas led the van against the pass which was hotly contested whilst the king sent his nimble Gallowegians to outflank the defenders on the ridge. Richmond, his meagre forces drawn up by Coxwold and Old Bylande, held on for as long as possible, allowing his king, 'being ever chicken hearted and luckless in war',[46] time to make good his escape before he and the other survivors, including the French knight Henry de Sully, surrendered to the Scots.[47]

The field thus yielded a fine crop of prisoners (Richmond and Robert I were longstanding enemies and the earl was not ransomed for two years) and an even finer haul of loot: for the second time all of King Edward's baggage and papers fell into the king of Scots' hands.

This was to be Bruce's last battle-field command and though he had won another sparkling victory and further humiliated Edward II, the raid failed in its main objective of capturing the English king. As a result the war was to drag on for several more weary years. Edward was chased to the gates of Bridlington. From there, more sedately, he was able to progress to York. Here, belatedly, he was joined by Harcla who suffered the full range of royal fury for his laggardly advance. Having thoroughly beaten up the East Riding, the Scots, loaded with prisoners and spoil, re-crossed the border early in November:

> And syne with presoneris and catell
> Riches and mony fayr jowell
> To Scotland tuk thai hame thar way
> Bath blyth and glaid joyfull and gay …
> That thai the king off Ingland
> Discumfyt in his awne countre[48]

Chapter 8
The Final Reckoning

Blood axeth blood as guerdom dew
And vengeance for vengeance is a just reward
For look what measure we to other award
Take heed ye princes by examples past
Blood will have blood, either first or last.
– Contemporary Ballad

The she-wolf

Robert Bruce might reasonably have anticipated that, following the 'Rout of Byland', the English king would have been minded to discuss terms, spurred by a second humiliation. The military advantage now lay wholly with the Scots and their ability to range at will over virtually the whole of northern England was unchallenged (apart from Harcla's resistance in the west). Bruce still maintained his two principal strategic aims: to compel Edward to renounce his claims to overlordship, and force him to recognise Bruce as Robert I of Scotland. Even as crushing a win as Bannockburn and the successful outcomes at Mytton and Byland could not together advance the war beyond stalemate. The bulk of the English lived south of the Trent and remained unconcerned by Scottish raids; the north was effectively abandoned to its fate.

Throughout these crucial years 1314–1327 the Papacy continued to exhibit a strong pro-English bias. The Gascon Clement IV was an unashamed partisan and John XXII, his successor, saw 'The Scottish Question' as an avoidable distraction from his grand plan for yet another crusade. Edward II, meanwhile, had found in Hugh Despenser the Younger an ideal replacement for Gaveston: able, shrewd, utterly ruthless, vicious and avaricious. Despenser quickly alienated his fellow marcher lords by his single-minded dedication to increasing his holdings at their expense.

Having, by the summer of 1322, apparently mopped up all

opposition, the king's position appeared impregnable, his coffers replenished from the loot of sequestered estates. When the redoubtable Pembroke died (possibly by foul play) in 1324, thus removing the final voice for moderation, the dead man's widow swiftly became a target for Despenser's avarice.[1] Queen Isabella was ignored and treated with contempt, particularly when fresh disturbances in Gascony flared into the War of St Sardos. The king did permit his consort to act as envoy to the court of her brother Charles IV, who was dangerously insisting that Edward should perform full homage for Aquitaine.

Edward and the Despensers feared what enemies might appear should the king quit the realm. For this Isabella had a ready suggestion: Prince Edward should be invested with the Duchy of Aquitaine and then do homage on his own account. This appeared entirely reasonable, neither king nor catamite saw the pit that was yawning. Once in France the lad was firmly under his formidable mother's thumb and she, disdaining her husband's summonses, was to become the focal point for a swelling group of exiles, dedicated to (in modern parlance) 'regime change'.

Prominent amongst these was Roger Mortimer, who had escaped from the Tower in the previous year and who now embarked on a scandalous liaison with the queen. Obliged to quit France for Hainault (Prince Edward was betrothed to the count's daughter, Philippa of Hainault), the exiles were gaining numbers and impetus. In September 1326, the rebels, bolstered by a mercenary corps, landed unopposed in Suffolk. King and paramour found themselves without friends; scurrying through their diminishing realm in a vain search for allies; presently both were made captive and Despenser reaped the full reward for his innumerable misdeeds:

> Hugh, you have been judged a traitor since you have threatened all the good people of the realm, great and small, rich and poor, and by common consent you are also a thief. As a thief you will hang, and as a traitor you will be drawn and quartered and your quarters will be sent throughout the realm … Go to meet your fate, traitor, tyrant, renegade, go to receive your own justice, traitor, evil man, criminal.[2]

None of these developments, dramatic as they were, proved to be of any assistance to the beleagured Northerners, upon whom the full fury of the Scottish attrition continued to fall. Incidents such as the Middleton rebellion can be viewed as mere brigandage, yet they also express something of the desperation and frustration of the Northumbrians, seemingly abandoned by the English polity. Andrew Harcla, now raised to the earldom of Carlisle, took the perilous step of opening direct negotiations with King Robert and talks were entered into at Lochmaben.

Harcla, without sanction, was prepared to concede the matter of sovereignty, though it is difficult to perceive quite what wider result could be hoped for as there was scant prospect Edward would agree. The draft treaty contained a raft of assurances and provision for the payment of compensation by the Scots. Bruce remained obdurate on the matter of the 'Disinherited' – cross border estate was to be extinguished. The Lochmaben Treaty, which reached its final draft by January 1323, is remarkable in that it anticipates many of the conditions of the final settlement; at the time, however, it was a presumption too far. Harcla, something of an arriviste, had overstepped the mark and given his local enemies the perfect stick with which to beat him, and they did not refuse the opportunity. His particular rival, Anthony de Lucy, orchestrated the campaign which led to the Earl's downfall and subsequent execution.

Though the prospects for peace thus appeared diminished, the crowning irony was that the English king appointed his creature, Walter Stapledon, Bishop of Exeter (later done to death by the London mob) and his catamite, Despenser, to lead a team of negotiators. The unwillingness of the English to recognize Bruce as King of Scots proved a near fatal stumbling block and he wrote furiously to the French knight Henry de Sully, one of his own delegation:[3]

> On this matter we have received letters of yours and transcripts of the king's letters saying that he has granted to the people of Scotland who are at war with him a truce; and this manner of speaking is very strange to us, for, in the other truces which have been made between him and us, we have been named the principal on one hand as he has on the other, though he would not style us king … And do not wonder therefore that we have

not agreed to this truce.[4]

Though it proved impossible to agree terms for an enduring settlement, an extended truce for a period of thirteen years was negotiated. In the circumstances this was an achievement and would certainly bring relief to the hard pressed Northern English. All occupied territories were to be restored, the erection of new defensive works was curtailed, a form of diplomatic relations was established and Edward II, for his part, undertook to exercise best endeavours to have the sentence of excommunication lifted from his opponent's head.

Rising choruses of complaint against these seemingly reasonable terms was growing louder in England, especially from the representatives of the Disinherited. Henry Beaumont, who was voluble in council and unafraid to voice boldly his opposition to the terms. For once, many Scots agreed; war had become a trade for many of Bruce's veterans, its spoils a steady source of income. In correspondence Bruce confessed he was experiencing difficulties in restraining his more ardent followers. On 1 March 1324, Queen Elizabeth presented her husband with a son, the future David II. Edward was soon under pressure when his difficulties with France arose and spiralled into conflict. Fresh talks were entered into in July 1324 when the Scots, emboldened, appear to have increased their demands to include the ceding of a pale or buffer zone.

Edward riposted by maintaining the question of English overlordship and brought forward some additional tactical gambits. Edward Balliol, son of 'Toom Tabard', was dusted off from obscurity and pressure piled on the Curia to extend the exclusion of the Scottish church. The courtship worked both ways, Randolph scored a personal triumph when he successfully argued the case for recognition of his master from the Holy See.

In April 1326 the Scots concluded an understanding with France, the terms of which were sealed by the Treaty of Corbeil. These embodied joint undertakings of mutual military assistance in the face of English aggression. This renewed entente led to a heightening of tension through the marches that summer, the prevailing truce notwithstanding. Some raids and skirmishes bickered along the line and a Flemish vessel, the *Pelarym*, with a complement of Scottish

pilgrims was despoiled off Whitby. Both crew and passengers, regardless of age or sex, were butchered.

The Treaty of Northampton

By the end of the year the political landscape had undergone a major shift. Edward II was a prisoner of his wife; the Disinherited had joined the rebellion and, by 20 January 1327, the king had agreed to an abdication. A few weeks later, Edward III, at fourteen, took the throne in his stead. The Scots celebrated the accession with an abortive raid on Bamburgh; it was business as usual on the border.

Roger Mortimer, though nominally subject to a regency council headed by Henry of Lancaster, proved as ruthlessly acquisitive as Hugh Despenser. His and Isabella's regime remained inherently unstable. The pair lacked any constitutional position and, as both would discover, this young Edward was an altogether different character from his father.

Despite the support they had received from the Disinherited and marcher lords, Isabella and Mortimer could not afford to undertake a resumption of the war. It was time for further talks. These negotiations proved largely fruitless, the Scots commissioners finally abandoned their lodgings in York, leaving some choice suggestions nailed to the doors! Talk without compromise aided nobody and both sides spread alarums; Edward III, full of knightly ardour, wished to teach these Scots a lesson, something his mother and her lover found difficult to gainsay.

The result was the near farcical Weardale campaign of July 1327, when a force of English chivalry, led by the young king, was run ragged in the barren wastes of northwest Durham and Northumberland by a will o' the wisp commando under the joint command of Douglas and Randolph. The expedition proved an expensive fiasco, with the Scots launching a bold night attack on the English camp with the aim of capturing the king. In this they failed, but the English floundered through the peat bogs without bringing their enemy to battle; the campaign achieved nothing and Edward is said to have wept with frustration.

Scarcely had the miserable and chastened English crept back into York than King Robert burst onto the marches in his final grand chevauchée, planting his banners before the defiant walls of Norham,

whilst Randolph harassed Alnwick and Warkworth. Once again the marchers were obliged to dig deep into their depleted reserves to buy the rampaging Scots off:

> The landis of Northumbirland,
> That next Scotland thar was liand,
> In fe and heritage gave he
> And thai payit for the selys fee[5]

Bruce, prior to his raid on Northumberland, may have successfully closed the 'back door' from Ireland, which had remained in turmoil even after Edward Bruce's death in 1318. Bruce, as the Red Earl's son-in-law, had a stake in Irish affairs. He negotiated a truce with the leading Anglo-Irish magnate, Henry de Mandeville; no blackmail this but a carefully constructed contract, respectful to both sides, with the Scots paying compensation for recent losses. Isabella and Mortimer had only the most tenuous grip on Ireland and this was shaken by fresh disturbances – quite possibly orchestrated by the King of Scots!

Bruce was thus able to exert pressure on the regime from several directions and may even have been contemplating a further diversionary raid on Wales. He would be acutely aware that, though he held the advantage, the inexorable progress if his illness might bring the game to an end before a lasting peace could be secured. Neither the English queen nor her increasingly unpopular lover could afford to delay a settlement. They had already galloped through the funds of Edward II and the Despensers and the cost of the abortive Weardale adventure added to their burden. On 9 October 1327 Henry Percy was appointed to lead the English commissioners. Bruce was still before Norham and presented the English negotiators with a list of six conditions precedent to any successful outcome:

1. The king and his successors should hold Scotland as free princes, with no homage to England;
2. Prince David would wed Edward III's sister, Joan of the Tower;
3. Cross border estate would disappear;
4. Both sides would provide for mutual military assistance (save for Scotland's current obligations toward France);
5. The Scots would pay compensation in the amount of

£20,000, (a very sizeable sum);
6. Edward III would exercise best endeavours to secure the release of the papal excommunication and interdict.

Of these terms it was the matters of sovereignty and cross border estate that were to remain contentious. The former was conceded during bargaining in November and December – a formal quitclaim, the return of all charters and historic papers. Consensus over the pernicious question of the cross border estate could not be reached and indeed remained unresolved even through the final drafting of the proposed treaty.

This single division, the final bone of contention would be the maggot that ate away the fabric of the settlement that marred the crowning achievement of Bruce's life and reign. On 1 March 1328 Edward III appended his seal to a series of letters patent that finally spelt the demise of thirty years of murderous strife:

> Whereas we and some of our predecessors, kings of England, have attempted to gain rights of rule, lordship or superiority over the kingdom of Scotland, and terrible hardships have long afflicted the realms of England and Scotland through the wars fought on this account; and bearing in mind the bloodshed, slaughter, atrocities, destruction of churches, and numerous evils from which the inhabitants of both realms have suffered over and over again because of these wars; and having regard also to the good things in which both realms might abound to their mutual advantage if joined in the stability of permanent peace, and thus more effectually made secure, within and beyond their borders, against the harmful attempts of violent men to rebel or make war; we will and concede for us and all our heirs and successors, by the common counsel, assent and consent of the prelates, magnates, earls and barons and communities of our realm in our parliament that the kingdom of Scotland shall remain for ever separate in all respects from the kingdom of England, in its entirety, free and in peace, without any kind of subjection, servitude, claim or demand, with its rightful boundaries as they were held and preserved in the time of Alexander of good memory King of Scotland last

deceased, to the magnificent prince, the Lord Robert, by God's grace illustrious King of Scots, our ally and very dear friend, and to his heirs and successors.[6]

For Robert Bruce this agreement had been over two decades in the making, through tragedy, loss, heartbreak and despair; latterly through the creeping wastage of mortal illness. This was the final fruit of the field of Bannockburn, the relinquishment of English claims and the recognition of Bruce and his line as kings of Scotland. John Balliol was simply expunged from the record, relegated to a footnote in history. Bruce was entitled to date his accession from the date of Alexander III's fatal tumble, Scotland must now surely be secure.

As a final stamp on Scotland's triumph the treaty was to be sealed in Edinburgh, a clear and unequivocal acknowledgement of true nationhood. The final talks were conducted 'in a chamber within the precincts of the monastery of Holyrood in Edinburgh where the lord king was lying'. Bruce was bedridden but still able to negotiate the final draft which was agreed on 17 March. He was surrounded by the senior Scottish clergy and the lay magnates, even the Anglophile David of Mar.[7]

The Treaty of Northampton, as it was styled (to the English it was 'The Shameful Peace'), was formalized in a series of five deeds or indentures, the wording of which consolidated that which had been agreed beforehand, all dated 17 March 1328. By October a papal bull lifting the excommunication and interdict had been issued, whilst the royal betrothal had been formally contracted at Berwick on 12 July.

On 7 June 1329, at his fine new house at Cardross and in his fifty-fifth year Robert I of Scotland, Robert the Bruce, Scotland's greatest king, finally succumbed to his illness – '*La grosse maladie*'. His heart was carried, as he had wished, toward the Holy Land by the faithful Douglas, who met his own quixotic end at the Battle of Tebas de Ardales on 25 March 1330. The redoubtable Randolph was appointed as head of the regency council, though he lived only until 20 July 1332, having crowned the seven-year-old David II the preceding November.

Peace was not of long duration. Mar and his army was decimated by the Disinherited at Dupplin Moor, Berwick was lost the following year and the Scots army again routed at Halidon Hill. A second and

equally-desperate war of independence was waged. When David II returned from protective exile in France he, too, led a host to fresh disaster at Neville's Cross.

The wars between England and Scotland dragged on over the decades and through three long and savage centuries, not finally resolved till, with crowning irony, James VI of Scotland ascended to the English throne as James I, on the death of Elizabeth in 1603. In this context, Bannockburn was but a rare victory in a series of conflicts wherein, in general engagements, the Scots were most often worsted, sometimes catastrophically as at Flodden in 1513 or humiliatingly as at Solway Moss nearly thirty years later.

And yet, it had not all been in vain. The Battle of Bannockburn, the Declaration of Arbroath and the Treaty of Northampton established beyond doubt that Scotland was a nation, a free and independent state, and that her sovereign was a free prince, not bound in fealty to the king of England. Bruce's struggle and that of the men and women who followed and supported him through the dark days of wretched flight and civil war, the long, hard years of attrition, the clawing back of castle and town, to the final great confrontation, was not a fruitless one.

The flame he lit in June 1314 made all that followed possible, gave back to his country its precious nationhood. In time the flame would falter but it was never extinguished. In the many dark days of the seemingly-endless grim conflicts, Scottish men and women would remember the men who fought at Bannockburn and the man who led them; and this perhaps, above all, is the test of greatness.

Appendix I
A Note on Sources

It is likely that the English source *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (*The Life of Edward II*) was written shortly after the battle by a monk of Malmesbury who has been identified with John Walwayn, a qualified lawyer who died around 1326. He may have had some involvement in the diplomacy of the period; his chronicle is well-informed and constitutes an excellent source.

The Lanercost Chronicle, named for the priory, was probably written elsewhere on the border but appears to be contemporary. It represents the work of a number of authors and was certainly completed before 1346 when David II gave the priory to the flames. The description of the battle may have benefited from eyewitness testimony.

Scalacronica was written by Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, son of the father who fought in the action against Randolph's brigade on the first day and was captured. The son was also captive a generation later, immured in Edinburgh from 1355 to 1357, when access to a good library and enforced leisure spurred his writing.

John de Trokelowe wrote his *Annales Edwardi Secundi* sometime after 1330. Trokelowe was a cleric, originally from Tynemouth, who found himself detained in St Albans for unspecified misdemeanours.

Geoffrey le Baker of Swinbrook compiled his chronicle probably prior to 1347 in Oxfordshire. He picked up from earlier authors and his account of campaigns suggests the original source had been personally involved or intimate with those who were.

Robert Baston was a Carmelite friar who rose to be Prior at Scarborough. A poet of some note, he is known to have accompanied English armies in Scotland during the reigns of the first two Edwards. His account owes a good deal to poetic licence and rather less to narrative history. At the time, apparently, the Scots derided his verses as wildly inaccurate.

Like Baston, the fragments in Bower's *Scotichronicon* are an early,

if incomplete, source. Bernard of Arbroath was Bruce's chancellor and thus well placed to understand his subject matter, yet his version is lacking in detail.

Archdeacon John Barbour (1320?–1395) probably began work on his epic poem *The Bruce* sometime around 1375. The author is believed to have travelled to England to collect testimony from eyewitnesses on both sides, though there can have been few living three-score years after the event. His epic account is wildly inaccurate when giving numbers of combatants and rather vague on detail.

A number of later accounts are certainly worthy of mention. John Morris and William Mackay Mackenzie both produced works in 1913, on the eve of a very much more frightful conflict. Of these, Morris is meticulous in his researches and his conclusions, especially on numbers, have been accepted by later writers.

Particularly eminent amongst these is Professor G. W. S. Barrow, who has written widely on medieval Scottish kingship and on Robert the Bruce. Peter Traquair published an excellent account of the Wars of Independence, *Freedom's Sword* in 1998, followed by Peter Reese's comprehensive and readable study of the battle two years later. A short but highly illuminating account was written for the National Trust for Scotland by General Sir Philip Christison in 1965.

Appendix II
Orders of Battle

It is notoriously difficult to assess, with any degree of accuracy, the numbers of men engaged in medieval battles. All assessments, however painstakingly arrived at, must ultimately remain largely, if not entirely, subjective.

The Life of Edward II describes the Scots as fielding 'a great force of armed men', later assessing the number of these as 'about forty thousand'. This, of course, is a wild exaggeration as such numbers would represent something in the order of ten per cent of the entire population! What does appear likely, however, is that the English may have been taken aback insofar as the Scots could field more men than they'd imagined.

Trokelowe describes the Scots attacking in 'dense battle array'. Lanercost avers they were 'in all their strength' and later speaks of the English charging 'as it were into a dense forest'. Le Baker also speaks of a dense formation 'in a very solid fashion in ordered ranks'. Abbot Bernard states the English had 300,000 cavalry and 40,000 foot, the former preposterous and the latter unlikely.

Amongst more modern authors there has been much debate, most notably between John Morris and William Mackay Mackenzie, who wrote just prior to the First World War, and the eminent and influential Professor Barrow in the 1960s. There is some element of consensus between their varying accounts. Those authors writing within the last decade, notably Peter Traquair and Peter Reese, have broadly agreed with their immediate predecessors, though the former has tended to pare the numbers down yet further.

When speaking of the English horse, *The Life of Edward II* puts the total at 'over 2,000 cavalry'. Barbour opines the number was far greater with 'barded' horses (those ridden by knights in full harness) numbering 3,000 alone. John Morris put the total at 2,400, Reese agrees with this total and I see no reason to differ. Barbour gives the Scots a far more modest cavalry arm, not more than 500 strong and

these essentially hobilers. Again, this seems a reasonable figure.

Barbour does, however, grossly exaggerate the numbers of foot. He gives the Scots 30,000 and the English over three times as many at 100,000; such numbers cannot be credited. Morris, writing in 1913, and having perused the muster rolls for Longshanks' campaigns in Wales, suggested that Edward II mustered, or sought to muster, nearly 22,000 infantry, including billmen, archers and some crossbowmen. Of these he estimates, quite reasonably, that no more than 15,000 were assembled on the field. With the cavalry arm, then, Morris gives the English a total of 17,500 men.

Added to these would be the Irish detachments, Scottish knights serving the English crown and continental adventurers. Mackenzie suggests a total figure of nearer 20,000. General Christison's excellent study of the field, which dates from the mid-1960s, agrees with Mackenzie.

How many Scottish foot opposed the English army? This is an even more difficult exercise. If we accept Barbour's ratio of three to one, this gives Bruce some 7,000 – Christison says no more than 5,500 'regulars', with perhaps 3,000 in the reserve. This would still not allow the *schiltrons* a deep deployment as they marched to their battle stations between the two watercourses on 24 June, but otherwise feels about right.

Barbour and other contemporary writers, whilst in any event prone to exaggeration, would also tend to lump in the non-combatants and camp followers. On the English side these (including grooms, sutlers, tradesman, women and whores) would be numerous.

If Christison suggests 5,500, Professor Barrow 500 more and Morris under 7,000, then a figure of around 6,000–6,500 appears a reasonable total. Peter Traquair's even lower estimate of 4,500 is rightly dismissed by Peter Rees as being too few to accomplish their deployment.

Taking these figures as a whole the following assumptions can be made in terms of numbers:

2,400	English heavy horse
17,600	English foot (including all Irish and other elements)
20,000	Total

500 Scottish light horse
6,500 Scottish regular foot
3,000 Reserve 'small folk'
10,000 Total

There can be little or no doubt that the 'small folk' included a number, perhaps a significant number, of females. Whilst the presence of women on the field is not generally acknowledged by chroniclers, they were almost certainly there, not as combatants but as water carriers and medical auxiliaries. A later Scottish battle, Harlaw fought in 1411, is remarkable as there is record that separate grave pits were dug solely to receive the bodies of female casualties, women who had fallen in the fight.

If we now try to assess casualties, our task becomes even more arduous. The contemporary accounts are irritatingly vague. If we look at Courtrai, and parallels always present difficulties, casualties on the French side, knights and gentry, amounted to perhaps 800, the Flemings escaping far more lightly. The loss of a comparable number of the English chivalry would have accounted for a full third of the force present.

This would be too many. It is likely that, given the thickness of the press, that relatively few knights were killed. Those who went down with Gloucester in that first intemperate charge were not numerous and at least one English chronicle speaks of the rest of the mounted affinity deliberately holding back. Even in the rout the Scottish force were not numerous enough to inflict real losses and the survivors, if they negotiated the water obstacles, would have a fairly clear run.

Whilst the English foot was scarcely engaged, some, perhaps hundreds together with more from the press of camp followers, would fall in the rout, either beneath Scottish spears or by drowning. The long march home through a hostile landscape would have seen many stragglers picked off and their carcasses picked clean. The total loss is impossible to estimate. Barbour claims 200 English knights fell and this may be pretty accurate, something under ten per cent of the total present on the field. We might guess that ten times as many of the foot also perished.

In purely economic terms the outcome of the battle proved a boon for the Scottish economy, struggling under the burden of nearly a

generation of war. Hereford, with a sizeable affinity of mixed horse and foot had managed an orderly withdrawal from the field and sought refuge in Bothwell castle, where the castellan, Sir Walter Fitz Gilbert, previously leaning toward the English, experienced a politic conversion and promptly made his guests prisoners. Apart from the earl, himself a prize of great value, Beaumont, Umfraville, Sir John Segrave, Sir Anthony Lucy and Sir Maurice Berkeley all went 'into the bag'.

Aside from the earl's cash value, his ransom included the release of a clutch of Scottish captives, including the king's, wife, daughter and sister, together with aged Bishop Wishart. The Earl of Gloucester was the highest-ranking fatality, along with over thirty lords and men of rank. Numbers of English foot surrendered outside the walls of Stirling and would be liable for ransom according to their degree.

It seems that something in the order of sixty per cent or more of the commons who either followed the king to Stirling, or Hereford to Bothwell, failed to return through death or capture. If, as Peter Reese suggests, this figure is applied to the mass of English foot as a whole, then perhaps as many as 10,000 failed to survive as far as the border.

Scottish losses were obviously much lighter, the English archers, during their brief ascendancy, might have accounted for numbers of Douglas's men. The Scots lost only three knights: Sir William Vipont, Sir Walter Ross and Sir William Airth. Reese puts their total casualties at not more than 200 and I see no cause to suggest they would have been any higher.

Appendix III
Choosing Ground

There has, over the years, been some controversy as to where the main action on 24 June actually took place. One early favourite was the Borestone, located near the present bronze statue. Whilst this may have formed a handy vantage it can swiftly be discounted. Mackenzie, writing in 1913, rejected this location out of hand. He favoured a location by Muirton with the battle being fought by the English facing west and the Scots' east, the field being bounded by the Forth and the Bannockburn. Professor Barrow opposed this view, citing Mackenzies' confusion over the interpretation of the terms 'Poll'. It was Barrow who championed a site further west, nearer to the settlement of Bannock.

As Peter Reese points out, this leaves the historian with a likely site bounded by the Dryfield to the west and the Carse of Balquiderrock in the east. Barrow took the view that the clash occurred in the more westerly portion but General Christison looked to a location further east in the mouth of the 'U' formed by the course of the Bannockburn and the Pelstream.

The argument continues. Peter Reese favours the Christison site (as do I) but Peter Traquair supports Professor Barrow. He does so on the basis that this area offers Bruce a narrower frontage across which to deploy his more modest force; less distance would allow for a greater massing of the Scottish spears and the chronicles do talk of a dense concentration.

Traquair, as we have seen in appendix II, is of the view that Bruce's infantry were less numerous than other writers would suggest at around 4,500. This would not give sufficient mass to the deployment on the site chosen by Christison/Reese. If, however, we accept the Scottish foot were perhaps 6,500-7,000 strong, this argument becomes more difficult to sustain.

Reese, in his findings gleaned by extensive walking of the ground and a study of the older maps, finds the gap across the neck of the 'U'

is about 0.7 of a mile in width, whilst Traquair feels it to be rather more than double this width.

Part of Barrow's argument is that the Scots were so confident of the ability of the *schiltrons* to withstand horse that they advanced regardless of protection on their flanks from the twin water obstacles of the Pelstream and Bannockburn. This is unlikely. Bruce, as we have seen, was extremely cautious; he would not wish to deploy on ground that might have left his flanks in any way exposed to missile attack.

Appendix IV
The Knights Templar

There has been some speculation that the Knights Templar fought on Bruce's side during the battle and that their stalwart support helped win the day. This theory suggests that it was their intervention rather than the commitment of the final Scots reserve, the 'small folk', that proved decisive. It must be stressed that there is no historical evidence to support this view, nor are their any references in the contemporary chronicles which could sensibly be interpreted as giving weight to the possibility.

Since the release of sensationalist fiction such as *The Da Vinci Code* and burgeoning interest in heresies such as Catharism and its attendant association with the legend of the Holy Grail etc., attention has focused on Rosslyn and the Templar connection.

The Order was founded in 1118 with the objective of protecting pilgrims to the Holy Land. Having overreached themselves and exposed their position through wealth and hubris, the knights were suppressed by Philip the Fair. Some of the order may have fled France for Scotland in 1304.

These refugees brought both treasure and specialist skills, particularly in the field of metalworking, that they had gleaned in the Levant. The site at Rosslyn and the career of Sir William Sinclair have been inextricably linked to the existence of the Order in Scotland. Given that the knights had been suppressed with the full backing of the church, any survivors would have needed to adopt a veil of secrecy.

Sir William appears to have been of the Douglas affinity and fell later in the Battle of Teba with his brother, on Douglas' doomed journey to the Holy Land. The Templars and Sir William Sinclair are also linked to the history of freemasonry in Scotland. However seductive the association, however, there are no objective grounds for associating the Order with victory at Bannockburn. That some of the Scottish knights may have been or remained members of what was, in

effect, an underground organization is, of course, a possibility. The leap toward giving the Templars or former Templars a key, decisive role cannot be substantiated.

Those wishing to read more could consult *Rosslyn* by Andrew Sinclair (Edinburgh, 2005).

Appendix V
The Battlefield Today

Much of the ground over which the battle was fought has been subsumed by subsequent building and the drab urban sprawl of modern Stirling, little of which could be described as an improvement. The great fortress, much remodelled since the fourteenth century, still holds sway, unchallenged on its rocky eminence, one of the most inspiring castles in Europe.

The National Trust for Scotland manages the heritage centre, which features the fine and much-copied image of Robert Bruce, sculpted in Bronze by C. J. Pilkington-Jackson. The centre and monument are on the left of the A872 as you head north toward Stirling. The left flank is now dominated by the line of the current motorway (M9) and most of the ground eastwards toward the Forth is heavily built up. Northwest of the centre is Coxet Hill, also developed, as is St Ninian's to the northeast.

West of the heritage centre would have been the area covered by the New Park, and the road to the south crosses the Bannockburn at what would have been the Entry. The actual site of the battle is bounded on the western flank by the railway and, running parallel, Pike Road.

Glossary

Aketon – a quilted garment, ‘soft’ armour, (derived from the Arabic word for cotton).

Arming cap – padded fabric hood or cap worn under mail.

Balinger – a smaller vessel, with single mast, part propelled by oars.

Ballista – a type of catapult, of classical provenance, shooting a projectile from an integral bow, tensioned by the operation of a windlass.

Banneret – a military rank, the holder rated above a knight and entitled to a square banner rather than a knight’s pennon.

Barbican – an outwork, constructed so as to create additional protection for a castle or the fortified gateway of a town, this could be erected in stone as a permanent addition, or constructed in timber as a temporary expedient.

Battle (Battail) – a division of an army.

Bill – a polearm, that was born of a fateful union between an agricultural tool and the military spear, much favoured by the English.

Bolt – the short thick arrow or quarrel, shot from a crossbow.

Bracer – plate defence for the lower arms.

Brigandine – a type of protective doublet with horn or metal plates sewn in.

Buckler – a small round shield, usually fashioned of metal, used primarily for parrying.

Caltrop – a rather unpleasant form of spiked anti personnel or anti equine device.

Captain – an officer in charge of a particular position or location, whose responsibility did not extend beyond.

Caparison – a fabric horse covering, both decorative and, padded for protection.

Chevauchée – a large scale raid into enemy territory to wage economic warfare, taking livestock and destroying crops and villages.

Cog – a medieval sailing vessel, primarily a merchantman.

Coif – a mail hood.

Comital – pertaining to the estates of a senior magnate (from the French '*comte*').

Conroi – a mounted detachment.

Destrier – the knightly warhorse.

Enceinte – the circuit of defences for a castle or fortified place.

Enfoeff – to grant a feudal estate.

Escalade – an assault on the walls, akin to storming.

Falchion – a cleaver-like sword with a heavy blade, a fine survivor is the 'Conyers Falchion' in Durham Cathedral treasury.

Fief – a feudal landholding.

Fosse – a defensive ditch.

Fuller – the central groove or grooves running down the sword blade, more for balance and weight than channeling blood as has been fancifully suggested.

Great Cause – the matter of the succession to the Scottish throne following the deaths of Alexander III and the Maid of Norway.

Harness – a full armour of mail or plate or a combination of the two.

Hauberk – a form of mail overgarment, reaching usually to the knee, the shorter version being the **Habergeon**.

Helm – the Great Helm was the knightly headgear of choice in use at the end of the thirteenth century.

Herschip – a raid or harrying, 'taking up' an enemy's lands, not dissimilar to the chevauchée.

Hobiler (Hobilar) – a light horseman who could fight from horseback or on foot.

Jack – similar in some respects to the brigandine but more simple, stuffed with rags or tallow and usually sleeveless.

Kern – an Irish warrior of low status in the service of a chief or, often, serving as a mercenary.

Lance – a tactical unit, built around a knights retinue, not fixed in terms of numbers.

Leaguer – a siege or blockade.

Mangonel – an engine for throwing stones. The arm is held back under tension with the projectile being shot when the arm is released to spring forward and strike against a buffer.

Mêlée – usually a mass combat between opposing forces, often refers

to a clash of mounted troops.

Mesnie – a household knight, i.e. of the lord's *demesne* or domain.

Motte and Bailey – a form of timber castle, introduced by the Normans, which features a yard or bailey constructed on a raised platform and containing domestic offices, guarded by a palisade, whilst the motte is a defensive tower built on a higher mound and purely defensive in function.

Palfrey – an everyday horse.

Pommel – the metal knob which completes the top of the sword hilt, contributes to balance, can be used offensively for striking a blow.

Pricker – a mounted scout or skirmisher.

Quillons – the bars or sections at the base of the sword hilt which afford protection to the swordsman.

schiltron – a formation of spears, particularly favoured by Scottish foot.

Surcoat – the long, flowing fabric garment worn over mail and bearing the arms or blazon of the wearer.

Tailzie – a form of legal entail (Scottish).

Trapper – padded horse protection.

Trebuchet – a large siege engine with a heavy throwing arm, the king of early medieval artillery.

Vintenar – an NCO in charge of a foot platoon usually twenty strong.

Notes and References

Preface

1. R. Smith, *The Utility of Force* (London, 2005), p. 57.

Chapter 1

1. This work of reconstruction was undertaken by the University Dental Hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne.
2. The King's malady has never been fully diagnosed but may have been paralytic leprosy.
3. A note on spelling: Bruce in old Gaelic is 'Roibert a Briuis'; in current Gaelic 'Raibeart de Bruis'; and in Norman French 'Robert de Brus (or Bruys)'. For the sake of clarity I have, in line with most authors on the subject used the anglicized version.
4. His sister Christina wed Gartnait, Earl of Mar, and another, Matilda, married Aodh of Ross.
5. Carrick is the comital district which now comprises most of South Ayrshire and Dumfries (in Gaelic 'Carraig' or 'rocky place'); the chief hold was Maybole Castle.
6. David I (1080–1153, King of Scots from 1124), was the sixth son of Malcolm III and the fourth of those siblings to rule.
7. From the Latin *scutum* = shield.
8. Mormaer = 'sea-officer'.
9. From the English Shire-Reeve (this function also tended to assume a hereditary aspect).
10. C. Tabraham, *Scottish Castles and Fortifications* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 30.
11. Kildrummy Castle became the scene of the epic siege where it was so nobly defended by Robert Bruce's youngest brother, Neil, who paid for his defiance with his life. Edward I made certain improvements to the enciente, traces of these being the main evidence for Edwardian castle building in Scotland.
12. Tanistry was a Celtic system for inheritance whereby the successful candidate, or 'tanist', was elected from a particular class or category of eligible claimants. This may sound democratic but

was the stuff of mayhem as claimants sought to level the odds by eliminating rivals, see F. J. Bryne, *Irish Kings and High Kings* (Dublin, 1973).

13. Feudal homage was the due owed by the vassal to his lord. The extent of this might vary according to the terms of the oath entered into by the parties, but might extend to a full military obligation. See J. J. Lalor (ed.), *Cyclopedia of Political Science, Political Economy and the Political History of the United States by the Best American and European Writers* (New York, 1899).

Chapter 2

1. A. V. B. Norman and D. Pottinger, *English Weapons and Warfare 449–660* (London, 1966), p. 60.
2. *Ibid*., p. 60.
3. *Ibid*., p. 60.
4. It was this period that gave birth to the story of Marmion, retold later by Scott.
5. M. Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages* (London, 1996), p. 2.
6. *Ibid*.,p.9.
7. Jean le Bel recounts that a dispute arose between the English and the Hainaulters which led to a serious fracas, resulting in several hundred casualties, see Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 178.
8. *Ibid*., p.251.
9. Shakespeare cast Falstaff as the prime practitioner of such corrupt practices.
10. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 123; Hugh Cressingham earned an unenviable reputation in Scotland, where he held the office of treasurer, it was largely his bungling which contributed to the disaster at Stirling, Wallace is said to have flayed his fat carcass and fashioned a belt from the flesh!
11. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–9. The effigy of Sir Roger de Trumpington (d. 1280), shows the knight reclining in full harness, his great helm attached to his belt by means of a chain or lanyard, the heater-shaped shield hangs from his right shoulder on a gigne strap. His sword belt hangs low, the preferred position for the draw from horseback. His arms are painted on the ailettes (these were intended mainly to cover the vulnerable neck area from a lateral

cut). He has steel poleyns protecting his knees and his mailed hands are joined in prayer – his expression is altogether purposeful. A later effigy, that of Sir Robert de Servans (d. 1306), from Chatham, shows this knight with his mailed hood thrown back and his mittens hanging free. He wears a scalloped fabric or leather pad holding the poleyns in place against the mail and to prevent chafing.

12. A. Boardman, *The Medieval Soldier in the Wars of the Roses* (London, 1998), p. 173.
13. Henry V is reputed to have said that 'War without fire is like sausages without mustard'.
14. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
15. D. J. Sadler, *Border Fury* (London, 2004), p. 9. The knights in question were William Roos, John Moubray, Peter de Mauley and Ralph Fitzwilliam.
16. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 116–17.
19. Aside from the improvements at Kildrummy, Edward attempted little serious castle building in Scotland, relying on garrisoning the existing holds and linking these with outpost chains. This was clearly not ideal and left the defensive system vulnerable, but cash constraints prohibited any more ambitious schemes.
20. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 134.
21. Sadler, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
22. P. Traquair, *Freedom's Sword* (London, 1998), p. 289.
23. Writer and explorer Tim Severin, as Professor Prestwich points out, attempted to determine the closest modern descendant of the medieval warhorse for a recreation of the route taken by Western European crusaders journeying to the Holy Land in the course of the First Crusade. He decided upon a breed of heavy horse from the Ardennes which, whilst robust, proved rather too broad in the back for long days in the saddle; in the event, the beast, like many of its forbears, never reached the Holy City.
24. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–2.
25. At Flodden in 1513, the Scots, descending from high ground to attack the outnumbered English below, completely lost momentum and cohesion when they floundered in wet ground. In the

subsequent mêlée the bill proved a far superior weapon.

26. John Mair (Major) writing in the sixteenth century, see Sadler *op. cit.*, p. 41.

27. A pele may derive its name from the Latin *pilum* – a stake, implying the structure comprised a wooden palisade and a timber tower within, the term is later used to describe the stone towers of the border reivers.

28. The Cathar heresy had flourished in the Languedoc region during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, de Montfort's formidable father had been active in its brutal suppression, finally falling at the siege of Toulouse in 1218.

29. Anthony Bek owed his advancement to Longshanks and carried out a series of diplomatic missions on his behalf. A grand prince of the church, renowned for hubris and good living, he was every inch the worldly prelate. He enjoyed the chase and built castles at Eltham and Somerton as well as the magnificent Great Hall in Durham's castle. His elder brother was Bishop of St David's and another sibling, Thomas, held the see of Lincoln from 1321. Bek quarreled with the king over his dismissal of the prior of Durham and suffered a brief forfeiture. Although reconciled with the king the feud simmered. See C. M. Fraser, *A History of Anthony Bek Bishop of Durham 1283–1311* (Oxford, 1957).

30. From 'The Vows of the Heron.'

31. Sir Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, vol. II (London, 1924), pp. 113–16.

Chapter 3

1. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 478.

2. 'Longshanks', as in 'long legs', a reference to the king's height and cavalier build.

3. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 386.

4. *Ibid.*, p.469.

5. A 'tailzie', or 'entail' – see Glossary.

6. A. Fisher, *William Wallace* (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 17.

7. '*Custodes Pacis*', i.e. keepers of the peace.

8. Baliol was from a wealthy Anglo-Norman line with extensive holdings in England and Picardy, the castle at Barnard Castle in County Durham represents their endeavour. John Baliol seems to

have been both inexperienced and unenthusiastic; one suspects the loss of his kingdom was not a particular source of lasting sorrow.

9. This was a cautious nod toward Yolande of Dreux, should she in fact be with child by the late king.

10. Edward of Caernarvon's grandfather, Henry III of England, was great-grandfather to the Maid of Norway.

11. Anthony Bek, churchman, soldier, diplomat, politician and practitioner of dubious property transactions. See chapter 2, note 29, above.

12. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

13. Bek had added the Liberty of Tynedale to his holdings, formerly a fief of the Scottish crown. This grant appears to have been in recognition of disbursements (bribes) to certain of the Norwegian delegates.

14. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 364.

16. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

17. Longshanks was, at face value, a good choice. He had an impressive record of similar adjudications at the very highest levels. Through Henry I of England he did have a direct, if somewhat remote, claim in his own right.

18. A stiff fine or premium of a hefty £100,000 (to accrue to the papal coffers as a contribution to the proposed crusade), due if the handover was delayed once a decision had been reached.

19. Malcolm IV had so conformed in the reign of Henry II.

20. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

21. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

22. The castellan of Wark, Robert Ros, was one who suffered from a divided loyalty, though his conflict was more romantic than politic and he was prepared to trade the castle to secure the favours of his Scottish paramour Christine de Moubray!

23. In very rough translation this means 'dig your way in and defend the town with a new ditch' – certain more pithy elements may have been lost in the translation.

24. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 46; Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 471.

25. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

26. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

27. 'Have we nothing to do but win kingdoms for you?' – see Fisher,

op. cit., p. 30.

28. *Bon besoigne fait qy de merde se delivrer* – see Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
29. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–6.
31. Clifford was a long established Westmorland line. Roger de Clifford had died in one of Edward's few reverses in the Welsh campaigns. The dead man's son, also Roger, served constantly and with distinction in Edward's Scottish wars; he was destined to fall at Bannockburn. See 'Military Service of the Cliffords during the Reigns of Edward I & II' in *Hobilar: the Journal of the Lance and Longbow Society*, no. 18 (1992).
32. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
33. D. J. Sadler, *Scottish Battles* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 41.
34. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
35. These Gallowegians or 'Gallgaels' were particularly ferocious in attack; see Sir Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, vol. I (London, 1924), p. 393. The wild men from the west, though useful in the attack, were notoriously difficult to discipline, as both David I and later Wallace discovered.
36. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
37. Sadler, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
38. The Umfravilles were a Norman line who held the lordships of Redesdale and Prudhoe in Northumberland, as well as the earldom of Angus. Members of the family fought on both sides. See Hedley W. Percy, *Northumbrian Families*, 2 vols (Newcastle, 1970).
39. Sadler, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
40. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 483.
41. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
42. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
43. Wages: magnate 8s per day; banneret 4s; knight 2s; sergeant or man-at-arms 1s. Rates for contracted service tended to be higher; see Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 485.
44. *Ibid.*, p.484.
45. *Ibid.*, p.486.
46. The supplies gathered included 7,000 quarters of wheat, 8,000 of oats, 4,300 of malt and 1,000 of beans and peas, with an additional 1,000 quarters of wheat from Ireland; see Prestwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 486–7.

47. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
48. The Dissenters were agitating for additional constitutional safeguards to be inserted into Magna Carta. Eventually a compromise agreement was reached and codified as Confirmatio Cartarum; see Prestwich, *op. cit.*, pp. 427–30.
49. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* the author entertainingly dates kingship from the arrival of Aeneas' grandson, Brutus of Troy, who exercises sway over the entire island. On Brutus' death the northern kingdom is devolved onto Alba, the younger son who, nonetheless, owes allegiance to his elder brother holding what was to become England.
50. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 494.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 494.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 494.
53. The Scots, to counter Geoffrey of Monmouth, produced an epic lineage for the kings of Scotland, tracing their origins to the pharaonic princess!
54. See chapter 2 for a discussion of this important battle.
55. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 497.
56. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
57. The cost amounted to some £938; see Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 499.
58. It is deduced from a record of quantities of sulphur supplied to the besieging forces that the use of gunpowder may have been current. See Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 499.
59. *Ibid.*, p.499.
60. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
61. A petroleum based incendiary. See David Nicolle, *Medieval Warfare Source Book* (London, 1999), pp. 294–5.
62. Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 504.
63. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 504.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 511.

Chapter 4

1. Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, quoted in Traquair, *op. cit.*, p.150.
2. G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce* (London, 1965), p.198. A taint of treachery clung to Gloucester and may have influenced the king's apparently pejorative attitude toward his nephew.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

4. C. McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces* (East Lothian, 1997), p. 29.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
6. Douglas was a cousin of the steward's, son of the commander of Berwick in 1296. The elder Douglas, having later surrendered, refused to hand over the boy as a surety. He was therefore kept in custody and died in the Tower, possibly, as Barbour suggests, through foul play. The son met Lamberton when a student in Paris. The Bishop's efforts to reverse the attainder were unavailing, see P. Reese, *Bannockburn* (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 86–7.
7. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
8. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 506.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 507.
10. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
13. Traquair, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–3.
14. *Ibid.*, 252.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–5.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
17. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
18. French representatives attending Edward's marriage were deeply offended by the prominent role of the upstart Gaveston. See Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
21. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
22. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
25. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
26. Henry Bohun, Earl of Hereford, the hereditary Constable who was to play an important role at Bannockburn, died in the fight at Boroughbridge on the rebel side.
27. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
28. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
29. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
30. Thomas of Lancaster was Lincoln's son in law; the demise of the latter left Thomas the wealthiest of the English magnates.

31. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
33. Bruce sent a fairly blunt response pointing out the king's perfidy toward his own countrymen.
34. Gaveston invented scurrilous nicknames for the magnates, a tactic not calculated to ensure popularity amongst a class who already despised him.
35. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
41. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
42. 'Pele' probably from the Latin *pilum*, for a stake or palisade.
43. Matthew Binnock jammed a haywain beneath the portcullis as the grill descended, enabling the eight commandos concealed amongst the straw to gain possession of the vital gateway.
44. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
45. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 178.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
47. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Chapter 5

1. N. Denholm-Young (ed.), *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (London, 1957), p. 52.
2. J. Stevenson (ed.), Chronicle of Lanercost (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 207.
3. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
4. Heralds were an indispensable part of the Household, it was the herald's job to act as a diplomat and scout; he would arrange truces; count the tally of dead and wounded; negotiate ransoms. He was expected to possess a detailed knowledge of the lineage and arms of magnates and gentry. He could determine matters of etiquette and precedence whilst acting as his emissary's royal master. Heralds were to be treated with courtesy and held immune from violence.
5. Stirling Castle, the gateway to the highlands. The great fortress still glowers down from Castle Hill, a steep sided volcanic plug.

Most of what now stands dates from far later than the fourteenth century; the buildings are, in the main from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the outer walls from the eighteenth.

6. The 'Polls' or 'Pows' – these have been identified by Professor Barrow, one of the most eminent scholars on the subject of the battle, as meaning a slow moving, miry waterway. The confusion with the 'pots', i.e. the man made obstacles dug by Bruce's sappers is understandable but erroneous.

7. The Carse of Stirling – since the fourteenth century the process of continuous peat harvesting and subsequent drainage has changed the nature of the landscape; most of the ground is now built over.

8. Sadler, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

9. Henry de Bohun would have a particular enmity for Bruce, and vice-versa, as his family (he was Hereford's nephew) had gained lands in Galloway from Bruce's attainder; obviously in practical terms, these had since reverted.

10. N. Denholm-Young (ed.), *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, p. 24.

11. Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, came from a distinguished line of Welsh marchers who had done good service under Edward I. Gilbert was the king's nephew and highly regarded by his contemporaries; despite his relative youth he had considerable experience of command. Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, was Edward I's son-in-law, immensely wealthy, of a long and noble line. He was a noted figure in the opposition to the king's tendency to despotism and an enemy firstly of Gaveston and, latterly of the Despensers. He died on the bridge during the skirmish at Boroughbridge in 1322.

12. Sir Robert Clifford was from a distinguished line of Cumbrian knights and a proven commander. Henry de Beaumont was the king's cousin; he was married to Alice Comyn and thus inherited, through her, an interest in the earldom of Buchan. Bannockburn was by no means the end of his career, he was to become a prime mover amongst the 'Disinherited' in the 1330s and led a rebel army to victory at Dupplin Moor in 1332.

13. Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, *Scalacronica* (London, 1836), p. 7.

14. Gray, a Northumbrian knight from the manor of Heton (Heaton) and father of the chronicler, was no novice in the Scottish wars; de Beaumont might have done better had he heeded the advice being

given!

15. Sir William Deyncourt – the unfortunate knight appears to be the only gentleman killed by the Scots during this combat.
16. John Barbour, *The Bruce*, bk 12, line 497.
17. A. Nusbacher, *Bannockburn, 1314* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 118–19).
18. Denholm-Young (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 52.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Reese, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Chapter 6

1. Gray, *op. cit.*,p.7.
2. Nusbacher, *op. cit.*, pp. 130–1.
3. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
4. John of Trokelowe, *Chronica et Annales*, H. T. Riley (ed.) (Rolls Series, 1865), p. 87.
5. The Lanercost chronicle clearly records the archery duel but this cannot have been a full deployment of the English bows, far more likely an outpost line only.
6. Stevenson (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 207.
7. The Umfravilles were lords of Redesdale and Prudhoe in Northumberland. William the Lion had invaded the county in 1174 to chastise them and was captured at Alnwick by a raiding party.
8. Lanercost does support this, saying the Scots fell tot heir knees to repeat the Paternoster before their final advance.
9. Denholm-Young (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 52.
10. Trokelowe, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
11. E. Maude Thompson (ed.), *Chronica Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke* (Oxford, 1889), p. 7.
12. *The Life of Edward II* implies Sir Giles Argentan fell in Gloucester's charge but in fact he perished later, in the rout, having first discharged his obligation to assist the king safely from the field.
13. The Life is in error here as a knight, even when in full harness, was not prevented from rising swiftly and fighting on foot, more likely he would simply be swamped by the press of footmen as he struck the ground and overborne.
14. Stevenson (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 207.
15. Reese, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

16. Baston's verses, quoted in Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. and trans. D. R. Watts.
17. *Ibid.*
18. For a discussion of the role or supposed role of the Knights Templar, refer to Appendix IV.
19. Gray, *op. cit.*,p.7.
20. Sadler, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
21. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
22. Denholm-Young (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 52.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p.81.
27. Baston's verses, quoted in Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. and trans. D. R. Watts.

Chapter 7

1. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
2. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
3. The Mortimers were Welsh Marcher Lords, with a sound pedigree of supporting Longshanks in the Barons' War. The conflict had fostered a particularly rancorous feud with the Despensers so much in favour with Edward II. See I. Mortimer, *The Greatest Traitor* (London, 2003), pp. 7—8.
4. Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
5. Mortimer, *op. cit.*, pp. 111—13.
6. Oman, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
7. Mortimer, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
8. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
9. *Ibid.*, p.75.
10. *Ibid.*, p.76.
11. *Ibid.*, p.76.
12. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
13. Two local lads who'd strayed from the walls were arraigned as spies, so great was the prevailing terror. On enquiry they were found guiltless; their ages were 11 and 9!
14. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 200.
15. *Ibid.*, p.201.

16. *Ibid.*, p.201.
17. The issue of Marjorie and the Steward would, in his middle years, and on the death of the childless David II, ascend the Scottish throne as the first Stewart king.
18. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
20. G. A. Hayes-McCoy, *Irish Battles* (Belfast, 1969), p. 39.
21. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
23. *Galloglas* were Norse-Gael mercenaries attached to Irish magnates, a form of feudal *Samurai* – see J. Marsden, *Galloglas* (East Linton, 2003).
24. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
25. Hayes-McCoy, *op. cit.*,p.40.
26. Traquair, *op. cit.*, pp. 210—11.
27. *Ibid.*, p.213.
28. Middletons: a Norman family with lands at Belsay and Mitford in mid-Northumberland; they still own Belsay to this day.
29. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
31. Traquair, *op. cit.*, 220.
32. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
33. *Ibid.*, p.94.
34. *Ibid.*, p.96.
35. *Ibid.*, p.95.
36. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
37. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
38. *Ibid.*, p.96.
39. The muster at Newcastle was to comprise 28,500 of all arms, that at Carlisle 11,000; over 7,000 were to arrive from Ireland with 10,000 being levied from Wales with the same number again being levied in June. The York Parliament significantly culled these impossibly optimistic numbers which were more paper strength than real. See Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 228.
40. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
41. Some resistance was offered but only in isolated pockets.
42. The legend of Marmion dates from the siege.
43. McNamee, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
47. Oman, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
48. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

Chapter 8

1. It was rumoured that the earl had in fact been murdered 'suddenly on a privy seat', Prestwich, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
2. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
3. This Henry de Sully was a French knight, captured at Byland.
4. Traquair, *op. cit.*, p. 200.
5. Hayes-McCoy, *op. cit.*,p.40.
6. Barrow, *op. cit.*, p. 363.
7. Mar became regent and fell in battle against the Disinherited at Dupplin Moor in 1332.

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